

WIRE



Issue 111 May 1993

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FURTHER INTO MUSIC

music and the days of rage

the fall · daniel lanoy

stan tracey at 50

suede, sugar, mode LPs

**MAY 68
25 YEARS ON**

how the world turned upside down

68-ers look back

free jazz reaffirmed:

shepp, braxton, brötzmann

and how the beat changed with it

impressions



**saturday
night jazz
with
brian morton
every fortnight
on BBC Radio 3**

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sounding off

live

■ Advance warning of this year's Company Week. Eight out of a probable ten musicians have been confirmed for the week (five days actually) taking place from 20-24 July and a few more 'names' are being approached. Regular Derek Bailey will of course be there as will (so far) Nick Couldry, Andy Diagram, Martin Klapfer — coming from the Czech Federation and playing toys and amplified objects! — Phil Minton, Ikuo Mori — drum machine — Robyn Shulman from the US and Alan Wilkinson (George Lewis couldn't make it, again). Currently there's negotiation with Camden for some outdoor events as pre-publicity. Expect some of the days to start off with established improv groups before the evenings' ad hoc ensembles take the initiative. Information at this stage can be had from Incus, 14 Downs Road, London E5 8DS.

■ 28-31 May sees the second annual gathering of experimental music via the London Musician's Collective. Concerts, installations, video screenings, workshops, etc. Among the performers are Stevie Wishart, Elliott Sharp, Paul Rutherford, Steve Noble, Maggie



Marilyn
Crispell

PHOTO: NICK WALKER

Nichols, Peter Hollingbery in other words an array of international and local improvising, experimental and marginal musicians. It takes place at Conway Hall, London (071 837 7557) with late night gigs and festival club at Community Music House, 60 Farringdon Road, EC1. But there's a fully illustrated programme available for more details — write to LMC, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX.

■ Perhaps because it's spring there's a selection of festivals around. Grown out of Camden to include Islington and Hackney is the renamed London Jazz Festival (14-23). There are over 100 events across the boroughs. Highlights include The Rebirth Brass Band, World Saxophone Quartet, Tania Maria, Harry Roberts, Craig Harris' Tallgators, Al di Meola, Louis Moholo's Viva La Black, Gary Crosby's Jazz Jamaica, and Anthony Braxton with Marilyn Crispell. That's only a selection so call the Festival hotline for more details on 071 911 1652. In Bath in May as part of the 93 International Festival are Jan Garbarek/Miroslav Vitous (28), cellist Steven Isserlis with an ensemble

covering *The Life of Schumann* (26) and the US gospel of The Five Blind Boys of Alabama (24). The festival goes on every day until 6 June so call 0225 463362 for information. The Brighton Festival is vast and covers a range of arts, but among the music on offer is Schumann (again) from violinist Kyung-Wha Chung at the Dome (7), Elvis Costello and The Brodsky Quartet at the Theatre Royal (28) and Etta James, with Jay Owens, Jr Walker and the Five Blind Boys again, at the Brighton Centre (29). Festival Information is on 0273 676926, and box office is 0273 674357.

■ The Silk Cut City Jazz season has already started and goes on to July, but in May Courtney Pine and his American Band can be seen at The Hummingbird, Birmingham (6), Queen's Hall, Edinburgh (7), The Grand, London (8) and The Ritz, Manchester (9). The American Band includes excellent keyboardist James Weidman and bassist Charnett Moffett.

■ Two from Somethin' Else and both part of the London Jazz Festival. The Somethin' Else/Straight No Chaser "Shape Of Things To Come" at The Forum (formerly the Town & Country Club) features an across-the-scene "collaborative vibe" — names include Tony Remy, Julian Joseph (working at the time of press on a cello, tuba, Indian percussion piece), Galliano, Bheki Mseleku, and more. It's all on 22 May from 8pm-2am. While on 14 May at the same venue are Flora Purim and Ato Moreira with their new group Fourth World for a special jazz dance gig with Jazz Warriors, rappers Urban Species and DJs Jez Nelson, Kevin Beadle, Debra and Giles Peterson.

News items addressed to Sounding Off should reach us by Friday 7 May for inclusion in the June issue

■ More London Jazz Festival. The Alouette Tales series commanders London's Prince Charles Cinema for five days of "Jazz On The Big Screen" with music from the 20s (1929's *Black And Tan* is a 20 minute short with Duke Ellington's first screen appearance) to the 60s (Ben Webster in Amsterdam).

Running from 14-22 May, the programmes will start at 9pm and the music won't be restricted to the screen either, because during the "Serious Session" musicians will be performing live before the movies and during an intermission. The best of both worlds.

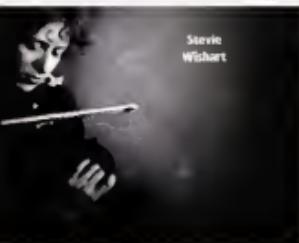
■ The longstanding sax/piano duo of Steve Lacy and Hal Waldron can be seen in various dates around the country. Glasgow Mayfest (12), Band on the Wall, Manchester (13), Colchester Arts Centre (14), Phoenix Arts Centre, Leicester (15) and the Playhouse Theatre, Oxford (16). Their latest CD, *Hothouse*, includes Ellington, Monk and Powell compositions and you can expect performances of those and their own compositions in this their first UK tour as a duo. For the Oxford date they're part of an all day jazz festival (they're on at 5pm) where



Duke &
Ethel

you can also catch Julian Bahula (2pm) and Level Two with a line up featuring Tony Marsh and Howard Riley (6.30pm).

■ The Stan Tracey Orchestra lead a Duke Ellington Mass in Durham Cathedral (29). In the afternoon there's *The Genesis Suite* with Bible readings and in the evening there's a service around selections from Ellington's *Sacred Concerts*. Possibly on tap (dancing) will be Will Gaines. Stan also appears at the London Jazz Festival on 22 May (Details 071 911 1652).



Stevie
Wishart

PHOTO: ANDREW POUNTNEY

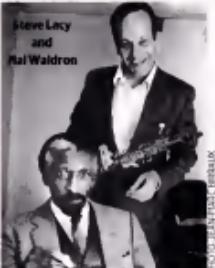
■ Drum and dance from Bahia, from folklore to contemporary, are celebrated by Onxa Ba Ba in performance at The Riverside from 19-22. More talk of green shoots — not Lamont-speak but shoots springing from the drum as part of the re-creational myths inspiring the eight dancers and drummers. Expect samba rhythms, back hips and hammer locks, with support from London's own Afro Bloc led by sometime Jazz Warrior percussionist Richard Ayuley. Box office details 081 748 3354.

■ Two from the heart (of British jazz, soul, Afro-connections, etc) Maz Beesley's High Vibes has the 21 year old Warrior leading a band including Jason Rebello and featuring Omar during the Brighton Jazz Box 93 at The Event in (natch) Brighton. The night also features US guitarist Melvin Sparks and the James Taylor Quartet who takes place on 2B May And in London on 2 May at The Orange trumpet Byron Wallen leads his band Sound Advice in a musical expression of 'Realistic Alternative Messages To Pessimism'.

■ In town, out-rock: three sessions at The Underworld in Camden High Street (071 482 1932) feature Monster Magnet (29 April), Ripper (1 May) and Truman's Water (8 May) for your weird-out, post-Sonic Youth [pre-Youth in Ripper's case — Ed.] noise highlights this month.

■ Three composers, three saxophone quartets, eight dates drawn in numbers as The Apollo Quartet tours the UK this month with Michael Nyman's new composition Songs For Tony as a centrepiece (see up-coming issue for a feature on Nyman). Other composers' premieres are:

Byron Wallen



complemented by two guesting six quartets and the whole performance is complemented by lighting effects. Dates include The Purcell Room, London (1), Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham (5), Royal College of Music, Manchester (7), Queen's Hall, Edinburgh (11) and also Southampton (13), Brighton Festival (22), Swindon (25) and Dartington (28). So there's a few more numbers for you.

■ Old World to New World (borrowed and blue — and HipHop and Indian Classical for that matter) The Three Rs' tour features three new British bands reeding, rapping and rhythming — David Jean Baptiste's modal flavoured jazz (with the reed, Nithin Sawhney's jazz-Indian rhythm-electronic technology the rhythm and Byron Wallen's Afro-Cuban-jazz-reggae the rap. The tour is in London at the Bloomsbury Theatre (16) and at the Glasgow Renfrew Ferry (20) as well as Hull, Bradford, Birmingham and Brecon up to August.

■ Singer Clare Martin leads her band on a UK tour until 17 May with a repertoire ranging across jazz to poprock and featuring in her the likes of Jonathan Gee, Clark Tracey and Ian Bellamy (but not on all dates). She's across the country from Epsom (1) to London (15). More details from 081 678 7038.

■ Ragga and Hip-Hop (fused with Asian rhythms) from the radical Bradford band Fun-da-Mental on tour throughout May supported by Blaggers ITA and Blade. It's all linked to the release of Fun-da-Mental's double-A side self-explanatory single *Wrath Of The Bookman/Sister Indo* (on the wonderful Nation label) this month. They're in London, Bristol, Birmingham, Cardiff, Leicester,

an editor's idea

One writer we asked to contribute to our *Memories of 68* Feature (in the end, he didn't) told me that, in his nightmares, the rest of his life was totally mapped out, as the 20th anniversary of so-and-so was succeeded by the 15 years celebration of what-have-you — and thus till he died. Sometimes it seems in magazine land as if the past has risen everywhere to engulf the present and the future, and nothing new can ever happen again. Because even if it does, we'll all be looking in the wrong direction and won't notice, or else just refer it all back to our usual point of comparison. As if we were all forever on the look-out for the next Beatles (or the next Henry Cow, or whatever).

The Wire is a magazine dedicated to new music — in its broadest sense — and to the discussion of new trends in old music. But because the meaning and force of innovative or non-mainstream music is developed in resistance to the routines, habits, failures and misapprehensions abroad within the mainstream, our commitment to the new, the odd, the out-of-the-way also commits us to the constant re-evaluation of everything else, everything you might sum up as the in-the-way.

History as practiced by journalists, even unabashedly critical journalists like us, is always in-the-way in just this sense, a sediment of limping nostalgias, unexamined assumptions, inherited half-memories and fossilized positions relevant only to long-dead debates. Which is why it's no bad thing to be forced to go back and look hard at some past time and its surrounds, or to ask those overlooked participants whose memories haven't been completely robotized by overexposure to put forward their version of events.

If a moment is fixed on as the "dawn" of something, there's usually a case for arguing it's actually the "last gleam" (so that punk rock, for example, looks with the passing years more and more like the last gleam of the 60s). Actually such moments are most often neither gleam nor dawn, but complex transition periods, complex enough to be seized by advance and rear-guard parties as their own. (Of course, the undecided midpoint is much less journalistically glamorous.)

The fact is, there remain many things still to be fought for, half-buried in the rubble, even in this much-memorialized year. Two examples, just for a start: the still-undervalued contribution to UK free jazz and improvisation of the South African exiles — and secondly, how unimaginably open and unstructured music promotion was for a delirious season, with totally unlikely folks playing the same gigs (and only the famous remembered today). To recall even a ghost of such possibility — at a time when fossilized genre is so very in-the-way — is to feel vindicated and empowered: this is what our magazine is about. **MARK SINKER**

sounding off

Leeds, Oxford, Glasgow and more so call 071 792 8167 for details

■ P-funkmeisters Fishbone have two dates to get stuck in your throat this month: Rock City, Nottingham (31) and advance warning of a 1 June date at the Kilburn National, London. Support from Tool and Eat.

■ Arthur Blythe, Joshua Redman, Andy Hamilton (the saxophonist, not the Wre writer), Nancy Wilson,



Mulgrew Miller, Regina Belle and more all in one weekend. And it only costs from £5.49. No, Jazz Cafe prices haven't gone up; that's for up to six nights of music in St Lucia at the Caribbean islands annual festival. A special package deal is available for the festival leaving London on 19 May (reservations: 081 875 1188)

■ Into Europe, contemporary opera company Music Theatre Wales take Peter Maxwell Davies' *The Lighthouse* to the Treppunkt, Stuttgart (8/9) in a production specifically designed for the ultra hi-tech centre, and Philip Glass's Edgar Allan Poe adaptation *The Fall Of The House Of Usher* to the Teatergruppen, Bergen, Norway (20-23). The Music Theatre is on 0446 794711

■ Highlight of the Jazz Factory at Dingwalls (071 916 2200) in May is The Archie Shepp Quartet featuring Horace Parlan (26). Other

shows in the series, which happen on Wednesday evenings, include Phil Upchurch (5), Gary Bartz Quartet (12), Julian Bahula (19). And if you're quick off the mark, there's still time to fit in the James Blood Ulmer, Jamalaideen Tacuma and Ronald Shannon Jackson line-up on April 28/29.

■ Cinematic phenomena at the ICA in London from 29 April to 1 May when the Kino Club present a specially devised show combining manipulated and projected found film footage (handled by "projectionist extraordinare" — it says here — David Lester) and combined with the music of The Shadowed Club (Billy Jenkins, Steve Noble and Roberto Belatalla) and more. Start time: 8pm as part of the Show In The Dark season of performance/projection

■ The Phoenix in Leicester is showing the newly scored Hitchcock classic *Bloodmail* (8) and the



Kino Club

Zimbabwean romantic comedy movie with a soundtrack of the best of "jt" music, called, for some reason, *Jt* (20/21).

■ Ever wanted to see one of *The Wire's* stylish live photographs blown up to four-story size? If so, what a strange fantasy life you live, but nevertheless, awaiting final confirmation, is a projection installation of jazz photographs across the scaffold- and sheet-covered St Pancras Station on Euston Road promoting (and part of) the London Jazz Festival. If it comes off, the installation will run from 1 May for three weeks until the end of the festival. Watch this space for further details, as they say, or better still keep an eye on St Pancras.

live from yorkshire

If the word "jazz" has a meaning, it's about recognising the moments when musicians are changing themselves and changing you. This isn't the sole preserve of "authentic" jazz either (Yorkshire translation: Trad, with banjos, boaters and oompah trombones). What's special about jazz-free improvisation is that it treasures that moment, makes it the issue. Rock can get there, but you need a fine balance between the initial rush of doing it and the dreaded hackwork of touring to publicise the CD. Living Colour at Leeds University — a mausoleum for middle-league rock acts that has only ever been woken up from soul-death by Iggy Pop, The Cramps and Grandmaster Flash — saw the band buried in the delivery of reliable product: good sound, great lights and, apart from some gobsmacking solos by Vernon Reid, a remarkable absence of the spontaneity that characterised their funk-rock jams of yore. The band's fans evidently had a good time — the music was just like the new album *Stain* — but we jazzheads felt cheated

In contrast, Hull's Spacemaid, playing at the Duchess of York, John Keenan's temple of rock-music-now, were spint-fresh and dangerous. Lommy Evans has a great voice and as she eased off her utility cardigan and whirled in the strobes it became obvious that here's a singer who just adores guitars, which — courtesy Alan Jones and Mat Tennant — were gorgeous and juicy and rocking, a feedback grunge cascade to perfectly frame their impetuous heroine. A band on the cusp of more — truly a groove

At the Puzzle Inn in Sowerby Bridge, free-jazz fundamentalists Hession/Wilkinson/Felt proved they could capture a jazz-audience ("seamless and immaculate?" said an older to me, unprompted), while Barry Guy's Jazz Composers Orchestra showed that ineqn recomposition and classical pretension — "look at me, I'm a conductor!" — can dampen even the posse of heroes. Phil Wachmann took off into a violin rhapsody whose threadbare understatement threatened to subvert all the

pomo of Guy's climaxes. Pete McPhail's alto was characteristically emotive. Paul Rutherford's trombone fascinated. But the whole was much less than the sum of the parts, and afterwards the rank smell of disappointment hung in the air. And to show it's not only the young ones who believe in their rant to the point where they overcome primal technique: Birdyak — concrete poet Bob Cobbing and lumpen-guitarist Hugh Metcalfe — were jaw-droppingly bad in Sheffield, barking mad and in-yer-face and thoroughly fascinating (if this isn't The Fall then what's a poetry reading?). Noted Sheffield tenorist Mick Beck proved up to the Dada duo's no-room-for-wastage onslaught — some heat! A week later Klang — the Weaver brothers' cello-drum duo from Nottingham, with guest trombone Chris Bridges — proved how well free improvisors can get on gnos with the universe of sound opened up by the MIDI-interface electronics used to find new sounds rather than merely reach for a wider public. **BEN WATSON**

RADIO

As if to tie in with our May cover features, Radio Three has a May 68 Evening on 5 May. As we went to press, times and exact details were incomplete, but expect it to start around 7.30 with an evening of music from America (Aaron Copland, Elliott Carter, etc) and to continue later with the likes of Christian Wolff and Miles Davis in a selection of the 68 American music "fringes". Around 9.30 a programme examining the relationship between music and the events on the streets of the time will feature John Cage, Robert Wyatt, Lemont Young and more. In addition during May four Sundays will feature music from 68 Ben Watson on the Jazz Musician & Freedom (2), Hans Werner Henze's oratorio dedicated to Che Guevara



Iannis
Xenakis

The Ruff Of Medusa (9), the music of AMM (Eddie Prevost, Keith Rowe, John Tilbury and Rohan de Saram) recorded in a special live studio appearance (16) and Iannis Xenakis' rare and imaginary ballet *Kroonoz* (23) — check press for times. Lastly, on 26 May, there's an evening looking at Britain in May 68 — political and social events and music.

Meanwhile, Radio Three's jazz concert broadcasts continue on alternate Saturdays with Lionel Hampton on 8 May from 10.30pm until 12.30am which is followed by a selection of concerts from the London Jazz Festival (again), including World Saxophone Quartet, Joe Pass and others. There's on 22 May at the same hours. On the Saturdays in between Brian Morton introduces Impressions. The first programme goes out on 1 May and was recorded at the Rare Music

Club in Bristol and features three bands — Keith Tippett, Northumbrian piper Pauline Cato and The Composers Ensemble. The 15 May issue has a specially recorded session from Take Three — the fine line-up of Louise Elliott, Laika DaSilva and Josefina Cupido. Finally on Three there's a five part series taking an in-depth look at the career of Dizzy Gillespie (including excerpts from a lengthy 1976 interview as well as, of course, some music). The half-hour programmes go out on Tuesdays at 4.30pm from 18 May and are repeated on Thursdays at 10.15pm.

OBITUARIES

Clifford Jordan, the tenor saxophonist who partnered Eric Dolphy on Charles Mingus's legendary 1964 European tour, died last month aged 61. Jordan was born in Chicago, and attended the same school as John Gilmore, Johnny Griffin and Richard Davis. He moved to New York in the 50s where he played with Max Roach and Sonny Stitt, before joining Mingus. During the 70s he led a group called The Magic Triangle, regularly toured Europe and became a respected teacher. His career went through a boom time in the late 80s following acclaimed appearances on albums by Art Farmer and Andrew Hill, where his tough, passionate playing style sounded as good as ever.

Kunio Nakamura, the founder of jazz+NOW from Sendai in Japan, died in December at the age of 48, after a long battle with cancer of the stomach, writes Evan Parker. Using his jazz record and coffee shop in Sendai as his base, he was one of the most active promoters of free improvisation in Japan, building up a mail order network for recorded music throughout the country, promoting concerts in the coffee shop and concert halls in his home town and also organising national tours for visiting musicians. Among these tours were Evan Parker solo, Evan Parker and Barry Guy in duo and the Swiss group Nachtluft. He organised concerts in Sendai for Fred Van Hove, Milford Graves, Ned Rothenberg, Derek Bailey, Hans Reichel and many others. Nakamura also established a record label under the title jazz+NOW with the same musical policy. His wife Eiko will keep the company going

letter from chicago

Spring in the City of Wind, and House is back, back in the place of its birth. "Techno is in its death throes here," the colliding Josh Werner tells me. "More House is being played again. Cashmere, Nightrowers, Merc Boys stuff, C&C Music Factory remixes, Todd Terry." He's speaking from Gramophone, a retail record mecca on Chicago's north side — it sets up the weekend dance remix shows on local radio, commercial and college. He sees, he says, more Hip Hop in clubs now, with an added audience in the Latinos who've progressed from "Miami freestyle through Techno to rap, stuff like Digable Planets. People are also playing Tribal, UK Progressive House, Detroit Techno." Most annoying request? "I'm Every Woman", Whitney Houston. But if you're going to work here, you've got to play certain things." More interesting stuff is being played, he says, at underground parties, but "the clubs are following the radio, when it used to be the other way round."

Opposite Wrigley Field, at the indispensable north side live venue Cabaret Metro, and Smart Bar, the disco downstairs, Joe Shanahan sees a similar pattern: "When 808 State came down to DJ, and played a lot of tribal, hypnotic stuff, we couldn't pull the dancers off the dancefloor! The Hip Hop/rock/funk/rap night is gone in Chicago, plus anything from Nine Inch Nails through Red Hot Chili Peppers, to the new Depeche/Helmet remixes. Guitars are playing a larger role on the dancefloor here." Upstairs at Cabaret Metro, he tells me, local college rock types draw the gasping throng. 11th Day Dream, Smashing Pumpkins, Poster Children, Hum, Tar and Gun Glue.

At Touch & Go, the Chicago-based underground rock label, Corey Rust, tells me that local boys Jesus Lizard's 1992 LP *Liar* is still selling furiously. Shamelessly, the former straight-edger recommends the new EP, "Clincher", from almost-veteran locals Tar, and the new 12", "Kernel", from almost-locals Seam. Is anyone new coming along — do Touch & Go ever get good demo tapes? "We never get any! Somebody send some!"

Over in Humboldt Park, Nelson Algren's old stamping ground, mostly Puerto Rican now, House producer and artist Vince Lawrence — he wrote the words to "Love Can't Turn Around" — has started a new label, Demand. "There'll be a guy called Reggie who raps over soul stuff, real underground. A singer called Keith [yes, that's Keith, readers]. He has a 15-piece choir on one song and sings all the parts. What sort of direction? You'll have to hear it! Not tell me now! I've got a letter to write! It's, it's black. Then there's Ramsey Lewis's sons Kevin, Fran and Bobby, they've formed a group called Life. It's black too, but in a different direction. You'll have to HEAR it!"

Finally, Ministry's Al Jorgensen is leaving town — for Austin, Texas. Mr RevCo goes south. Hey Al, aren't these your Jethro Tull albums? Don't forget them all! **MYRNA MINKOFF**

the Catalan performance group La Fura dels Baus and their sister organisation the Baus Fundació inhabit the borderzone between civilisation and savagery. At the opening to the Barcelona Olympics, they directed 1200 performers through a Mediterranean sea spectacle, with music by Ryuichi Sakamoto, culminating in the presentation of a naked, bleeding sacrifice to the world's leaders and 500 million television viewers.

Their most recent performance, *L'Endià De Lo Fongo*, took place this March in an industrial Barcelona suburb, when they staged a private party for former workers and their families, inside the gaunt iron foundry where they once sweated, now to be demolished. At the centre of the piece, two excavators are cast as Gods, and the howling ecstasy of their fucking seeds downpours of silver rain. Surfacing from a freshly dumped steaming mound, maggot-like creatures, male and female, shed their cerenwrap chrysalises and ready themselves to ruck, West Side Story-like. The god-excavators select their champions, a funeral brass band heralds the demolition of a wall, taped worker voices speak of their alienation.

Whether in their original nine piece *La Fura* line up or operating as Baus Fundació brokers of expanded chaos, incorporating outside collaborators, they complete the circle of modern primitives embracing a global underworld. They're spiritually keyed in to performers as diverse as Einstürzende Neubauten, America's Jim Rose Circus and Survival Research Laboratories, the Vienna action artists, Japanese Butoh performers, Australia's Mod Max series. Each in their own way scratches at civilisation's veneer, nipping away its livid scabs to reveal the savagery beneath.

Of them all La Fura dels Baus have gone farthest in tearing away the audience's comfort blanket by thrusting them into the very heart of their performances. Operating outside normal theatres, they strand spectators in the centre of unusual arenas and subject them to all manner of refined and primitive cruelties.

True to their name, which translates as Vermin Of The Sewers, their mostly naked, weapon-wielding warhorses scatter themselves among bewil-



dered spectators. Divided against each other as much as the audience, they hurtle themselves through the crowds to engage in battle on customised shopping trolleys or wheeled funeral pyres. They emerge from below, descend from the eaves, spitting gobs of raw meat, spraying blood, paint, powder and arco-welder sparks — woe betide anyone in their path. And all the time ritual beats, pounded out on upturned oil drums, form the rhythm beds from which amplified horse and squealing sax trampoline terror off walls or canals until the whole arena resonates with panic.

"The public's role," explains Carles Pardisa, one of La Fura's nine founders, in conversation in Barcelona, "is to bring reality into our dreamworld. Through their presence we can register the full impact of what we do. They soon lose the people they come with and suddenly they feel physically alone in an experience they're not used to, dealing with some kind of threatening situation that might be totally new to them, like a bomb in the tube station. They're no longer watching the show. They're living it."

Very quickly, spectators learn to look out for themselves. But, out of the confusion, patterns begin to emerge. In them one recognises La Fura dels Baus's extraordinary skill to plot narratives out of chaos. The above thumbnail Fura sketch is compacted from four different performances. Each has a distinctive character, its lyricism ranging from moments of sheer beauty to scenes of astonishing cruelty.

The most recent piece *Noun*, introduced three elements — woman, word and personal computer technology. Delivered from a polythene bathtub amid splashings of afterbirth, a formidable amazon figure very quickly finds herself trapped in a giant computer game where she is pitted against a magnificent *kyōto*-skirted male warrior. In La Fura's world, it seems, everyone is born to struggle or die.

Not exactly, at least not all the time, responds Carles. But their bodies are their theatre of research. "We have concentrated on reaching the archaic roots of man, and violence inevitably emerges when you look deep within. Performances mirror outside realities. It's ridiculous to avoid violence. But there are other things — beauty, communication."

Not unnaturally Antonin Artaud has influenced their thinking. "Artaud and the surrealists intuited the power of art and its relation to the subconscious, and time has proved them right," Carles continues. "Theatre can be the union of all sorts of physical, living arts, incorporating visual elements, music, technology, everything. Such theatre disperses the patagonia effect. That is, a man who talks about the sea without having seen it is experiencing the patagonia effect. It's not uncommon in the modern world. Theatre and art linked together in real time through music help us live real experience." Such theatre is not so much cruelty, he concludes, as inoculation. Better wet feet than cold feet.

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La Fura dels Baus have released several discs in Spain. A video compilation of their four main performances is in preparation. Further information from Baus Fundació, Diputació 291 2-e, 08009 Barcelona. Special thanks to translator Lisbeth Hall.

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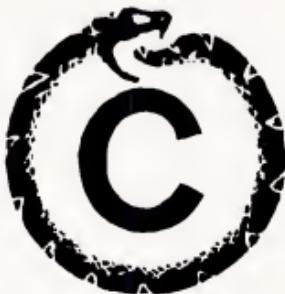
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Sylvia Hallett

string driven thing



PHOTO: SABINE CARL/ETAT/SYGMA

How do you create the sound of someone plucking out a living heart? Sylvia Hallett is the kind of artist who'll leap at the chance to find a solution. "You get inventive with balloons and water," she reminiscences about the time she was asked to help out with the sound-effects for Rik Mayall's *Grim Tales* at the BBC. She also once sprinkled *Essence of String Quartet* over Primal Scream's "You're Just Dead Skin To Me Baby" way before Costello — via The Brodsky Quartet and *The Juliet Letters* — caught a whiff of that classical aroma. As an unclassifiable tape composer and improvising multi-instrumentalist, Hallett's numerous projects eliminate musical boundaries and challenge our lazy ranking systems. Apart from playing violin in improv string trio Arc (with Gus Garside and Danny Kingshill), she's accordionist and cardboard tub-thumper in British Summertime Ends (who appear at London's Tenor Clef on 29 April), the ve-hides for Clive Bell's anarchic, Ortonesque probing of the underbelly of English private life, and her services as a composer are constantly sought by a variety of contemporary dance outfits, most recently the spidery, shape-changing Emrynn Caid for her *Virginia Minx At Play* show. "I think the way sounds work is that each has its own emotional energy, and it's a matter of distilling that once you start to work in a theatrical context," explains Hallett of such collaborations. "That in turn can create a dialogue with the performer as well."

These dance pieces are usually committed to tape once the choreography is finalized. Arc, however, is a project that thrives on live interaction between the three players, and under ideal conditions conjures a refined spookiness intensified by cellist Kingshill's impromptu, whimpering whale-song. Although it's all strictly unplanned, their best pieces extend towards a sustained pose and wavering freeplay before reaching an elastic limit and breaking on through to a sunlit strip somewhere above cloudbase. Yet improv's still extremely marginal (there were just six of us at the group's last London appearance). Perhaps that's because we're all too knowing about music; when it comes at us in raw cane it's too much for the palate. "Last night in Luton, two poets came up to us asking questions like, 'What were you thinking about when you wrote that piece? How do you memorise it?'" says Hallett. "But the radical thing about improvisation is that it's like animation with Plasticine, the way you can create one character and then totally transform it into something else." I wondered if she felt her original classical training had been shed like a slough. "I never abandon anything, only incorporate. Anyway violin was never my first instrument, and I only started enjoying it the moment I gave up learning it. I think Schoenberg has a lot to answer for we all like a good tune. When I used to go to Finnsy/Ferneyhough/Boulez type gigs, people leaving the concert hall would be whistling these inane ditties. I think we want tunes. I love

melody even if it's atonal, because it's never completely arbitrary, you can work with the subtle dynamics of semitones and intervals and still move people."

Some of the pieces on her solo album *Skimming* compare with the intoning, ritualistic, percussion-encrusted music of George Crumb. A rich, rewarding and downright eerie record, it's a very private pastebook of sample-collages, percussion loops and sound-effects, a *musique concrète* whose centre hasn't set. Interspersed between the bigger pieces is Sylvia alone with her violin, skimming with the bow and singing, buoyed up on the spray of notes like a flying-fish. Is this innovative technique a way of wrenching some control over this most demanding instrument? "I do sometimes end up feeling very out of tune, out of sync with the violin, and the singing can be a way back into it, if only because it reminds me to breathe. But I never have a problem in a nice live space where you can allow the silence to speak as well."

The album moves from the unremitting chaos of the first track, "Dreams Of Fish" with its sleepwalking visions of "fractals on the screen" and "I'm only just breathing" refrain, through the tragic portrait of teenage suicide, "A Salty Wake", and all the aforementioned virtuosic wrangles with the fiddle, to the concluding 15 minute "Soft Shell", which ends with a haunting accordion theme and the sound of a child crying. There's a growing sense of something created at the end, a belief in the nourishing, fertile power of music. "That's quite valid, but it was inspired by a more sinister dream I had where I kept catching glimpses of a child appearing and disappearing among the corridors of a derelict building in Beirut or somewhere. It's also to do with our remaining soft and vulnerable to the hardness of life, whether it's guns or the media. It's so easy to be seduced by the latest fad, whether it's chaos theory, black holes, or that house in the country. It stops us being in our own dreams." Find the time.

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Daniel Lanois

ambient starmaker



Since the early 70s, as a pedal steel, lap steel, slide guitar and dobro player, I've been trying to expand the musical context of instruments very much associated with specific local traditions, working with innovative or avant-garde figures like John Cale, Harold Budd, Danny Thompson and David Sylvian, but also in mainstream pop, with everyone from Marc Bolan to The Christians, Procol Harum to Julian Cope.

For me, and not simply because I've worked with him, Daniel Lanois is the most important producer to have emerged in the past ten years. He too works the edges as well as the centre. He helped Brian Eno shape his ambient music, and then went on with him to turn U2 into world superstars with the production on *The Unforgettable Fire*, *The Joshua Tree* and *Achtung Baby*. He helped Peter Gabriel find his definitive sound on the 1986 classic *So* and the recent *Up*. His productions for The Neville Brothers' *Yellow Moon*, Bob Dylan's *Oh Mercy* and Robbie Robertson's *Storyville* have been acclaimed by these musicians' most exacting fans. As a recording artist in his own right he released 1989's *Acadia* — and now Warner Brothers are releasing the followup, *For The Beauty Of Wynona*.

Considering such high profile work and collaborators, Daniel Lanois remains enigmatic and shadowy, as do his methods. As a musician, I got the chance not so long ago to work at Daniel's studio on an album project for Harold Budd, and in so doing gained a valuable insight into the working methods of Lanois and his colleagues, Mark Howard and Malcolm Burn.

Currently his working base is a magnificent but slightly run down colonial style town house situated in the French quarter of New Orleans. But when I recently talked to him about *For The Beauty Of Wynona*, he revealed that he was growing dissatisfied here. "I've got the itch to move on. I've made a few records in New Orleans — some good ones, and I'd now like to make some records in other parts of the World."

Ambience, an important factor not just in Lanois' music, but in his approach to the recording process itself, is understandably easily achieved in this house of shadows. In fact, the evocation of mood precedes the creative process, and to call the house a studio in the normal sense would be misleading. There is no soundproofing or acoustic treatment, as if he one day just walked in and said, "This feels right, set the gear up over there." The recording equipment, lovingly collected by his brother Bob, is in today's

terms a museum-exhibit of vintage technology: a 20-year-old API console from the Record Plant in New York, Tannoy monitors and a prime collection of valve microphones, some dating back to the Second World War.

As for his methods, it's instructive to quote him on his experiences working with Dylan: "Most of the recording was done in a single big room that had everything in it, all the recording equipment, monitors, PA system, musicians. There's a kind of communication musicians get if they are performing close together. We would naturally balance the instruments by ear, and not have to rely on someone working a mix in a pair of headphones. At first we made too big a thing of cutting a track and it was not a success. The best results came when we adopted this more intimate arrangement."

A further insight, as related to the genesis of the new album: "When there is time to loll during a production, I play my guitar — that's the most fun. And I always keep a DAT running in case some ideas come around that I want to refer back to. I played this instrumental that flowed nicely, and later I fell in love with a two minute piece of it, and ended up superimposing this against some train sounds that I recorded in Berlin. The result is the eerie dark sound that shows up on the backend of 'The Collection Of Plane Clair'. The second track, 'Brother L.A.', is one of my favourites. The foundation for that happened at a jam session in New Orleans. It was a jam on my song 'Still Water', but it got more raucous and my guitar effects box blew up and got out of control, and I started having fun with it. That's what that crazy guitar sound is."

Last time we talked, Lanois said that he was planning to move away from atmospherics to a harder sound. Is that still the case?

"Well, I did want to get away from atmospherics a bit — not because I don't love them, but I like to keep making discoveries. I think the atmospherics are still there. They are a way of establishing mood, and the mood I naturally gravitate to is dark — bittersweet, so atmospherics belong to that personality. Even though I may try to change, I can't run away from the mood that comes naturally to me."

Throughout his career he's kept weighty company. Does working with word class stars — even those whose successes he's partly responsible for — have any effect on the direction of his own music? "I think all the records I make have an effect on my direction. If you spend so much time on a project with people that you love — because you respect the thing you're dealing with — it's bound to rub off on you. Right now I'm trying to develop my skills as a performer. It's about communication, about getting what's burning inside me out through my guitar, through my voice to an audience. I can communicate on records, I'm just learning how to communicate live." He'll be performing a one off show at the Grand, Clapham on 22 May. Perhaps that's the place to discover where he's going.

B.J. COLE

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READER

So it's time once more to strap on a Stratocaster and crank the amps up full. The music industry's current desperation to gloss over its slump has seen the guitar being plugged as our means of musical salvation. The ludites who fear Techno's anarchic autonomy, Hip Hop's 'lack of musicianship' and the piracy of sampling are hastily attempting to fasten musical safety belts.

Surrounded by plastic punks, peddling sub-Zeppelin riffs dressed up in black attitude, giving the kids what the business wants, it has become understandably tempting to ridicule the phallic fallacy of the long-hair-with-axe — or indeed to avoid all contact with high watt guitar amplification.

However, the incantatory possibilities of the instrument were realized on one of last year's best kept secrets. On its initial release, *Voltion* (ECM) by the Finnish group Krakatau was left stranded by the prevailing tide of second-hand Grunge-mongers and consumers. Randomly surfacing as an isolationist alternative to the rock-dinosaur menagerie, resisting the Anglo/American obsession with "rocking out", the record welds rock's primal noise energies to the intricate intensities of Euro-Improv. Fittingly enough the group is founded and steered by its guitarist, Raoul Björkenheim.

On *Voltion* Krakatau emit an explosive array of multifaceted sounds and ideas. Björkenheim's role is suggestive. Unlike his obvious contemporary, German guitarist Caspar Brotzmann (whose group Massaker matches Krakatau for extremes of intensity and invention), he's no spotlight-hog. Instead, he weaves menacing hallucinatory textures round Jone Takamaki's oddball collection of homemade instruments, or his more conventional saxophone. Otherwise, he duels with Alf Forsman's dissipatory maze of drum figures (bringing to mind perhaps the cathartic spirit of the John Coltrane/Rashied Ali entanglements on *Interstellar Space*).

Of course, when Björkenheim chooses to forgo the background drone (or slide) in favour of fiery attack ("Bullroarer"), he unleashes incredible monstrous rashes of dissonant chords, succeeded — on "Chirrigo" — by spellbindingly graceful playing. Using an extreme vibrato, he bewitchingly voices the yearning so integral to the shamanic music of Korea. Throughout the recording his style and music seem to be implosive, but still always invigorating. The songs, which are refreshingly original, somehow also summon mysteriously ancient qualities, the effects of which Björkenheim himself seems to be trying to come to terms with:

"We sort of joke amongst the band that everybody else is playing Modern Jazz, while we play Primitive Jazz," he explains, over a long distance line from his home in Helsinki. "We sometimes get in some sort of state where the music just completely takes over when we play live. We're obviously physically there, but the playing becomes the total focus. So instead of just becoming a programme or a platform for entertainment, the whole performance can or will become some form of ritual."

Björkenheim was born in Los Angeles in 1956. He spent his first 25 years moving back and forth between Finland and the USA, finally leaving the States after graduating from the prestigious Berklee Music College in Boston. He settled in Helsinki, where he began to integrate his interest in ethnic and electronic musics into the bands that he was fronting at the time, reinforcing the rock and jazz styles which he had already become adept at. He remained aware of the pitfalls of selfishly pillaging world music styles: "Ethnic music became a great source of inspiration, but not just for

Away from the grunge and metal mainstream, Raoul Björkenheim and his Finnish group Krakatau are shaping an alternative future for the guitar, fusing rock noise excess with Euro improvisation. In his first UK interview, Björkenheim speaks to K. Martin about dissonance, ritual and John Coltrane.

under the
VO

Björk helms menacing
hallucinations, duels with Alf
Forsman's drums, unleashes
monstrous ruses of dissonance



cano

"What I love in Coltrane's playing is the fluency, and the ideas. It's all so organic and primal and that's what's lacking from the hi-tech fast food music made now."

stylistic xeroxing, as the copy always pales in comparison to the original. It would have been pretentious to go and start making music with ethnic interludes in a dilettante manner, to say I'll throw in a little of this or that."

With Volton, Krakatau steer clear of such cultural plundering. Bjørkernheim's studies with West Africa guitarists and percussionists, or, in Tatarmaki's case, the Balinese master flautists, enabled them to gain a certain spiritual support without falling into the self-satisfaction usually associated with such international badge-wearing. These studies offered the opportunity to learn from other disaffected musical minorities, both players having recognized the same emotional needs and responses, and they were aided in their quest for release through music, and strengthened in their opposition to the excremental hardsell of entertainment muzak. The studies probably also reinforced the pair's resentment towards the Anglo-American bombardment of their homeland's record racks.

Raoul is after all the latest in a long line of brilliant Scandinavian musicians who have been — and still are — largely ignored by jazz style-fetishists. Hardly authentic enough for those milked on Blue Note newivism, musicians like Terje Rypdal, Edward Vesala or Jan Garbarek are much underrecognized — at best voyeuristically viewed as ethnic eccentricities from cold countries. Perhaps inevitably, then, that Bjørkernheim feels a stronger affinity for the land of his ancestors than the country of his birth. As he readily admits: "At one point we as a band had a very strong feeling that we were being oppressed by the Americans' new colonialism, the new musical imperialism."

The direct influence of Vesala was experienced by Bjørkernheim during his three-year spell in the former's own project Sound and Fury (he played guitar on *Lumi*), during which time Vesala coaxed innovative advances from him: "Vesala wanted me to really let loose and totally obliterate anything that had to do with standard guitar. So for the three years that I was with him I had to just forget about playing anything related to the normal approaches and instead find new sounds to colour his pieces." On the sleeve-note to Volton Vesala is quoted as remarking: "Well, that was guitar, Raoul, but I don't want guitar. I want shooting stars, rocket flares..."

Nonetheless, feeling constrained by the compositional requirements of Sound and Fury, Raoul left to form Krakatau, keen to match his new found lust for innovation with a self-confessed love of Hendrix. He sought to free rock, and at the same time escape from jazz. "It was a conscious attempt by me to somehow violate the conservative concepts which you have in an American guitar style."

It's taken three tries for him to reach this goal. His debut, *Attuol*, was a patchy jack-of-all-trades affair, advertising his stylistic virtuosity but lacking any memorable moments, showcasing a glut of ideas in need of a context. *Alive* followed its great moments included the blazing pyrotechnical high-

lights in "Sormu" and the amazing scrape and sustain of "Ancient Dust", but the recording lacked overall cohesion, or a focal point. On Volton, the promising signs from these early releases blossom — it's a mature statement of a group finding its voice and setting, the overall success due, in part, to Raoul finding suitable sparring partners in the shape of Takamaki and Fongman, players capable of complementing his approach.

Raoul's continual self-improvement and quest for new textures have definitely been spurred on by his increasing respect for John Coltrane's soul searching sax-exploration. As with Brotzmann, exposed to father Peter's playing from such an early age, Bjørkernheim is a guitarist drawn towards the physicality and expressiveness of the saxophone. Infected by Coltrane's intensity, he attempts to pull every last drop of emotion through each of his six strings.

"The stuff I've been listening to most recently is definitely Coltrane. What I love in his playing is the great fluency, and the ideas of course. It's all so organic and primal and that's what seems so lacking from most of the hi-tech fast food music made now."

Throughout Volton, his guitar sweeps and slides, occasionally exploding into cascades of notes. Moving from still drones to distorted clusters he summons up the spirits and the feeling of Meditation or Interstellar Space without resorting to cheap forgery. It's a determined playing that very much illuminates the lack of genuine innovation or intensity in the playing of the various jazz mediadigitar darlings of today. John Scofield, Bill Frisell, Vernon Reid.

Meanwhile, a lack of conviction injecting the majority of the modern guitar players results only in a determination to plagiarize, then cash in, so Bjørkernheim's passionate odysseys could well be destined for a life confined to the margins, faced with a market where economic safety dictates relocations on the speedily bankable. Almost completely isolated (apart from Caspar Brotzmann, Rudolph Grey and KK Null are perhaps the only similar six-string dissidents, similarly ostracised), too noisy for mass consumption, they will perhaps at best be viewed by rockers only as continuing the tradition of such difficult-bastard guitar-players as Bailey, Rowe, Chadbourne etc. Yet the stinkiness of the avant discourse will undoubtedly not take them into serious intellectual consideration, their rock tendencies rendering them aesthetically untouchable, if not obsolete.

The dead end destination reached by the Retro reiteration of Slacker Rock and the confinement of a decaying Improv/experimental scene to the back rooms of the urban pubs, leaves little space for manoeuvre. So it's left to the mutant originators to find a way out. John Zorn, Godflesh and My Bloody Valentine are all in the process of storming mass consciousness by ignoring the cultural border guards and following their own, singular instincts. Krakatau have already illuminated possible escape routes from musical ghettos and audience slumps. Thankfully, their recordings offer no conclusive evidence as to their next destination. We should revel in the anticipation and then marvel at their newfound trajectories. □

Krakatau will be touring in the UK later this year.



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1993

marks Stan Tracey's 50th year as a professional musician. He has recently been signed to the EMI/Blue Note label, with the promise of the reissue of albums from his own Steam label's back-catalogue, from the mid 60s on. Britain's senior jazz pianist on the classic jazz label, level with the youngbloods and new signings at last. How does he feel? "I'm pleased. If I was 20 years younger I'd be ecstatic, and if I was 40 years younger I'd probably explode."

Portraits Plus, an Octet album of tributes to Monk, Rollins, Duke and Gil Evans, is the first of the Tracey Blue Notes. The word is, it's selling well, "more than Glen Campbell" anyway. Proper distribution should finally ensure the appropriate (wider) public for the Tracey oeuvre. The Steam recordings scheduled for reissue are the classic first version of *Under Milk Wood* (from 1965) and a duo-double, *TNT* with pianist Keith Tippett, and *Sonatrax* with John Surman. A Best Of compilation will follow.

Stan is giving his first interview for *The Wire* in 10 years (the last was in Autumn 1983). It's the Tower Of London syndrome — if you live in the capital, you just take it for granted and never visit. It'll still be there tomorrow. When a jazz great makes a rare visit from overseas, everyone knows to make a fuss — but when he lives round the corner, you maybe never quite get round to it.

Born in 1926 he too began as a youngblood — on the accordion, of all things, playing "gypsy" music for ENSA, only graduating to piano in the late 40s with jazz dance bands. In the 50s, he moved into the now almost legendary British small-group jazz world, heroic in its isolation — MU restrictions kept Americans out of the UK — and determination. Throughout the 60s, by contrast, as the house pianist at Ronnies', he played with many international jazz greats — Ben Webster, Sonny Rollins, Stan Getz — and began to cement his reputation, as much through his own compositions (mostly for big band) and increasingly original improvising style as the calibre of musician he was playing for. In the 70s, though clearly "established", he nonetheless went all the way out on occasion with 60s-generation free improvers like John Stevens, Trevor Watts, Mike Osbourne and Keith Tip-

Is Britain's greatest undersung jazz pianist at last getting the mainstream attention he's always deserved? As Stan Tracey finds his records — new and old — receiving the full Blue Note promotional treatment, Andy Hamilton gets him to spill the beans (well, almost) about his music. Caroline Forbes pictures a quiet giant in his prime.

tracey

A black and white photograph of a man with dark hair and sunglasses, resting his chin on his hand. He is wearing a dark shirt. The background is dark.

in
blue

pett. Throughout the last three decades he has led a variety of excellent sextets, septets and octets

Since 1983, and his last encounter with *The Wire*, he has been awarded the OBE, and has continued his series of fine albums, outstandingly with the big-band *Genesis* and the duo album *Plays Duke Ellington*. But there has been a hiatus between the late 80s demise of *Steam* and signing to Blue Note, so it's doubly good to see *Portraits Plus* in the record shops.

Stan has always preferred to let the music speak for itself. "I find it very hard to put into words the things I like about music." But his difference with words isn't justified. This is someone with very definite and forceful ideas about music, expressed with a sharp wit.

Double partner Keith Tippett adheres to the creed of the free improvisors and tries to excuse anything he has played before. What are Stan's own feelings about improvisation? How much is really new? "I love Keith, but he's an idealist. Everybody's got their own licks, and those licks are little islands to jump off into the sea of the unknown. They're reference points ideally of course would like to improvise and every phrase to be for the first time. But that's not possible. Monk, Parker, Gillespie, Ellington, they've all got their licks. It's like conversation. You might open with a 'verballick', and that is a springboard to a 'freer' conversation."

So it's partly a necessity, and there wouldn't be an individual style without these phrases. Nonetheless, Stan has drawn great inspiration from free improvisors, in particular the great alto saxophonist Mike Osborne, who sadly retired from the music due to illness (their live album from Bracknell on Ogun demands respite). The next question gets interrupted. I was going to ask what he was thinking of (while improvising) "Before you ask, it's impossible, you can't explain."

Words like "pungent", "quirky", "percussive", "angular" describe however inadequately, the Tracey piano style. His playing is always meant to show how a classical technique isn't needed in jazz. But he has a strong, two-handed style with plenty of block chords rather than the weaving single line of the bebop players. Has he got the technique he needs for the style he has? "I think I've got the technique I deserve. I'd like to have more technique, yes, but not so much that I fall in love with it... I have to say that sometimes a lack of technique will make you concentrate on creating a musical idea, whereas if you've got an excellent technique you can just do something spectacular that doesn't have too much musical thought."

How do you practise? "When I practise here, I'm not seeking to improve my technique. I'm just keeping my chops alive." He doesn't practise patterns. "There's no fun in it for the performer. Half the fun when you're improvising is stumbling on something all of a sudden that takes you aback a little bit. You're always trying to keep that thought alive, but after about eight bars it withers and dies and



Sonny Rollins asked of Tracey back in the 60s: "Does anybody here know how good he really is?"

you're back on the islands again."

Stan is a very interactive performer, eager to exchange ideas with the soloist or rhythm section. "The occasional chuckle together is nice." So those players like Stan Getz and Tubby Hayes who are disinclined to interact are losing an important source of inspiration? "Yes, I think so. But you ask one of them, and they'll probably say 'Of course not, I don't want anybody messing with my solo, it breaks my train of thought'."

How has your playing developed over the decades? Words run out again. "Very hard to answer that... Like standing naked in front of a mirror and somebody saying 'What do you see?' I can say that it sounds more confident, the sense of harmony better-developed. It's a little better technically." (He also says of his work in the 50s, "When I hear recordings of myself from that period, I can hear musical naivety and innocence.") Stan has always been a lover of "space". "There's no need to go roaring off in a digital frenzy. Space is what makes what came before and what comes after interesting."

Portraits deals with four of Stan's main inspirations — Rollins, Monk, Duke and Gil Evans. It features many of his regular partners of recent years, including saxophonists Art Themen, Pete King and Don Weller, and his son Clark on drums. He was always a Rollins rather than a Coltrane man. "There's more humour in Sonny's playing." And for those who still haven't heard, Rollins returned the compliment when he asked of Tracey back in the 60s, "Does anybody here know how good he really is?"

Boogie-woogie aside, Monk was the first pianist influence. Again, the "musical jokes" attracted him. But he gets tired of the comparison. "I actually do think I've developed my own style now. When I listen to recent recordings, I can't hear any of that influence at all." "This must be right," he says, "it's Rollins's style, and Monk's, and Tracey's. There are parallels, but they are equally individual."

Stan developed his orchestration technique by trial and error. "I'm completely self-taught." But Duke — of course — was the big influence. "He's such a cunning orchestrator. The way he mixes his instruments sometimes, it's almost impossible to work out what he's doing." Transcribing Ellington's *Sacred Music* for a concert project (see *Sounding Off*, page 4) "drove me mad". Headphones on, volume turned up full blast, because there's one instrument in there that is maybe playing a little bit off-mike. You want to know what it is he's playing, and you keep going over this same bit, listening to this bastard, because you know if you don't get it, you're not going to get that sound."

Transcription may not be his first love, but then neither are composing or arranging. "When it's all over, and it passes the 'good housekeeping' test, I like it then. But up until that point, it's a bastard. It's all to do with self-doubt. I so want it to be right, and to have some sort of meaning." Stan's current work-in-progress is the *Unison Suite*, commissioned to celebrate the amalgamation of the trade unions COHSE and NALGO. An improbable venture, maybe, and indeed the composer is finding it tough going. The deadline is June, but this is probably not going to be recorded for Blue Note — the next release will be a different format to the Octet on *Portraits Plus*.

We get back to the perennial problem of British jazz. Stan is cynical about the so-called "Jazz Revival". "It's just something to say... It's like saying 'Oh, the sun's coming out'." The pianist is a survivor in a genuine sense of that over-used term. To have made a living for 50 years exclusively from jazz is a strikingly unusual achievement. Despite his sober assessment of what fate may bring, he still wants to push the music forward. "Well, I would change the phrase 'push forward' to 'find out more about the music'." In his early years it was always just "a valiant effort by the British players", but that attitude persists. Because Stan Tracey's work has so entered into the fabric of modern jazz in this country, it is all the more important to listen to it with fresh ears, to make the effort of re-discovery. It is true today, as it was 30 years ago, that he is one of the most individual voices anywhere in jazz. □



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fall
into a

groove

Sam Batra talks to The Fall's
ogre-in-chief Mark E. Smith
and finds a mellowed man.
Or does she? Keith James
materialized his spirit.

In 1987 I left The Fall's *Bend Sinister* LP on a bus back from the Portobello Road. I had just bought it and couldn't afford to replace it at the time; this record which held so much expectation, that I'd listened for eagerly on the John Peel Show weeks before its release. *Bend Sinister* became lost property on London Transport — falling into the keeping of hands (and ears) I'll never know.

Of course I ultimately tape-copied the LP from a friend and the loss didn't seem to matter so much. Hearing 'Mr Pharmacist' being played at an alternative disco (as they were known then) was still a special thrill. But it took me a while to forgive myself in my adolescent way and somehow The Fall were never quite the same for me.

Seeing them live — by contrast — has always been a mixed experience, sometimes predictably competent, other times uncompromisingly dull. Perhaps, given his vocal delivery, there was some expectation that Mark E. Smith sported his own idiosyncratic flourish, Manchester cousin to Ian Curtis's idiot dance or Morrissey's flourish and fail — but he simply clutches the microphone intensely, occasionally letting go to swing his arms. But for all its lack of visual drama, the frame is always Mark E. Smith's obliquely laconic misanthropy. Always different, always the same, the line runs — it's a joke, of course, but it's still true.

They appeared in 1977, somehow punk but not punk, evolving into one of the seminal Manchester groups; in the 80s, they were increasingly associated with images of resentful Manchester folk-history, via titles like "Hit The North" and "Deadbeat Descendant". The city's character and culture permeates their work. Others, heirs to the same tradition, have come and gone — The Smiths, Happy Mondays, Factory itself, all no more. The Stone Roses have submerged — working so long on their second LP that it's become a legend in its not-quite-existence. The rumour is now that the historic city itself is at a standstill, ruled by nothing but gang disorder. Through it all, The Fall, its cultural ambassadors, hover in and around the margins of pop, hanging onto their distinctive voice and lonely direction.

Still, they need some excuse for the disappointments of *Extricate* and *Shitwork*, the records that made me think I'd grown out of this music, that perhaps *Bend Sinister* was better left on that bus. I suddenly didn't possess the staying power to grant them more than a couple of spins — they just didn't entice me. So, has Mark E. Smith been disillusioned with the pop scene over the last few years, I wondered?

"No, not really. I feel the same as I always did. We started a very long time ago but we started so young that 14 years has gone by fast. I just keep on writing really... 60% of my practical time is spent writing songs."

Smith's faintest misanthropy is hardly apparent in his conversation. He is personable and polite, apologises several times for being late and laughs a lot, all things the mythology dictates that Mark E. Smith is not. He's reticent about his work, and unwilling to be drawn on just any old thing. Still, he's perfectly capable of railing when he has to, as per myth. Talk of his work patterns — the current LP was made in two months flat — sends him into familiar territory.

"God, these types who spend their time retiring to the country and thinking about Greenpeace, putting out as few LPs as they possibly can. There seem to be loads of them, I don't want to end up like that. When we were with Fontana they kept getting rid of all these other bands and one day they said to us 'Don't worry we won't review your situation till March.' I just thought then and there, forget it we're going now, so we walked straight out. I wasn't going to be treated like that. You need some autonomy and control."

Smith is apparently one of those that *has* to create — making LPs isn't a chore, it's a necessity. It comes naturally (and country houses and Greenpeace don't). The critics may deride him, and occasionally wish his output was less prolific, but it's his driving force. Probably this prolificacy has held The Fall together, as each new LP becomes a mental work-out for its writer and main-man. However this may be, the new album *The Infotainment*

"I like dancing to some of the House and Techno things. I like the way they abuse machines. I've always been into that idea."

Scan is the most interesting for years. The songs are memorable, odd phrases and peculiar melodies — and sometimes the lack of them — constantly returning, haunting some crevice in your head. Back on a truly independent label, Permanent Records, run by former Fall manager John Lennard, Smith seems comfortable — and his serrated edge is rediscovered.

With talk of leaving labels and workmates, conversation strays onto the recession (and the most curious disparity): "The recession stuff's a good excuse it seems to me for most things, you know cutbacks and the like. People keep using it as a feeble scapegoat for throwing others on the scrapheap. It's a bit weird isn't it if people aren't going to gigs that they still put the prices of gigs up, when they should be putting the prices down."

Which is fair enough, perhaps, but still expressed more in the manner of man-in-pub than the legendary Man-With-Chip. There's a gait between his uncanny ability as a writer and performer to articulate, and his conversation in interview, often funny, occasionally quotably pointed, but hardly remarkable. Perhaps it's not a complete surprise, though it's a let-down. In a way, of course, it explains The Fall's continued existence this way he provides himself with a continuing means to comment, cryptically and intelligently — one that suits him, that makes him think that he's in command of You press on, hoping, probably fruitlessly, for the legendary honed and twisted blade to start spurring.

He is disparaging about Manchester — he recently moved back there from Edinburgh (he says he enjoyed living there) — in a manner that only the Manchester-born could get away with, but his tone of voice indicates a cynical affection for the place — it's an old garment, but he's comfy in it.

"You know, it's settled down a bit there now. When the Hacienda became the place to be, everything got out of hand. Before that there would be all different types hanging out there — Goths, punks, skins, the lot. But then things changed and everyone tried to look like they were in The Stone Roses and pretending they were on E and that. It just got boring and uniform." Pretending they were on E? They were, weren't they? "Nah, most of the time they were just pretending."

He cackles as if he were sitting in a working man's club ridiculing the younger generation. These days, he belongs to a bygone era of Manchester sub-culture now old and very distant from the current scene (though "belongs" may always have been the wrong word). Lasting so long brings sagacity with it — not that he didn't always seem somehow plugged directly into ancient Manchester wisdoms and histories. Either way, he has a perspective on the city that means above all that he knows when fellow Manarians are faking it, running around at raves or out of their heads.

I imagined that his attitude to dance music would be just as cynical — especially as on *Infotainment* several tracks experiment with it. This is hardly core Fall-territory, or so my adolescent self would have thought, but one of the best moments on the LP is the cover of Sister Sledge's "Lost In Music"

which catapults into sounding like a keyboard out of control, straight into Smith's deadpan "The Palace of Excess leads to the Palace of Access." The original lyric "nine to five" becomes "ten to five", a smart and funny comment on the commercialism of the current rave scene. But far from being dismissive, Smith's actually — if curiously — generous

"Some of it's pretty cool. Not the watered down stuff, mind, which has a limp beat and an old Ronettes song worked over it. ... But some of the House and Techno stuff I like dancing to. I like the way they abuse machines mainly. I've always been into that idea. But I can't imagine sitting down and listening to that stuff.... I wasn't particularly sending dance up. I was just playing around with it. I just hate it when technology is employed in a bland way. That leaves me cold."

I ask about "The League Of Bald Headed Men" the LP's spacey House excursion, with Smith's taedium rap buried somewhere below the music.

"All these blokes in their thirties who suddenly got wrapped up with rave, converted by it and tried to get into the scene. They've started making a business out of it. That side of it is really seamy. That irritates me. And that's what's pathetic about London forever trying to catch up with the rave scene. You know that's been left behind now in Manchester."

Various dance tracks on *In/Entertainment* attest to Smith's enjoyment of the genre. At the same time, there's hesitancy, a hint of self-consciousness, chords seeming to stall while Smith's rap intercodes, as much second thoughts as headlong rush the titles give the game away — "Paranoia Man In Cheap-Shit Room", "A Past Gone Mad". With any other group, you'd think they were only demonstrating how easily they can turn their hand to rave — but such journeyman-tactics would be most un-Fall-like. Anyway, it sounds as though they're as close to hedonism as they could possibly be

So, 14 years now... Don't you ever feel like jacking it in and doing something different?

"No, not really. I will keep going but I'd like to do more theatrical and spoken word collaboration as opposed to dance ones."

He's been here before, of course. There was the short play *Hey! Lucifer!* at the Hammersmith Lyric (with a plot that prefigured Godfather II by some years). This was followed by his collaboration with Michael Clark / *Om Kunkus Oratory*, a bizarrely imaginative meditation on William and Mary of Orange's arrival in England (a subject Hollywood as been curiously reluctant to pursue). Do words interest you more than music? "Yes they do. But the

idea has always been to combine words with good music. That's always been my main aim."

He won't say who The Fall might be working with in the future though it's clear he's got definite people in mind. "Once I've got these interviews out of the way I'll be free to get on with it, won't I?"

He's just as reticent about his current likes and dislikes. "I like things like I LudiCrous and Tackhead. I listen to some jazz like Coleman, otherwise loads of rockabilly and weird stuff."

The first single to be released from the LP is "Why Are People Grudgeful?" with a playful Ska feel. It doesn't seem like a natural choice, especially when there's the contagiously lyrical "I'm Going To Spain." A song — with an 'Y' that pretty much resembles the Fall's frontman — that perhaps tells of Smith's disillusionment with the UK

"No, I like living here. That song's meant to be a shtick on *Elodoro*. This idea of people upping an leaving a sinking ship and going somewhere sunny. It's a bit of a con."

You're 34, aren't you?

"Yeh. Suddenly edgy. How did you know?"

It's the age of the '70s in the song!

Smith laughs, as if the moment he's got a song out of his system he forgets it totally. "Oh yeah, you're right, it is." (Laughs again) "How old are you then?" He stops, suddenly coy. "No, I shouldn't ask that, it's rude."

Ultimately, for all his gripes, nothing will put him off — certainly none of the usual things. He's not even sick of touring — The Fall will be on the road later in the spring.

"I'm looking forward to it. It's good fun," says the man who's made miserablist more eminently sustainable than anyone else. Once I preferred The Smiths for this to The Fall, but Morrissey went and spoiled that. Of course it's disorienting to hear the man praise things for being "good fun", and I think once I would have worried greatly about this, listening to my *Bend Sinister* tape alone in my bedroom, dreaming of Saturday night's alternative disco.

But now I'm an adult, my dreams are different. I don't want my teenage idols to be their own cartoon images any more. In the crevices in my head, I wave to that bus from the Portobello Road as it pulls off with my copy of *Bend Sinister* and everything else from that, and start to dance again to *The In/Entertainment* Soon. Creative misanthropy means much more than not having fun. Growing up means finding new ways into old pleasures. □



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10 things

Above: Julie Felix (with guitar) leads the march from Northumberland Avenue to St Pauls.

CND's Pat Arrowsmith is the banner-carrier on the left.



Facing page (anti-clockwise from top): Dakota Station sings; Peter King swings on the steps of St Pauls; (l-r) Jon Hendricks, Philly

Joe Jones and Peter King; former Ike & ette P.P. ("Pat") Arnold with Alexis Korner; Philly Joe Jones snaps back.

On April 15 1968, the annual Peace March took the form of a tribute to Martin Luther King, murdered a fortnight before. Many musicians took part, among them Americans then resident in London. This is Val Wilmer's pictorial record.





Mark Sinker provides a guide to 68, and offers reasons why the events in Paris in May of that year have had such a lasting impact on music.



a year in revolt

Actually there were other notable months. In January, in Vietnam, the Tet Offensive proved that a Third World Guerrilla Army could give pause to the most powerful, advanced nation (a setback less military than psychological, but vast, all the same). In February, three black students in Orangeburg, South Carolina, were shot dead demonstrating outside a still-segregated bowling alley, while in Warsaw and Prague, students marched against unreformed communism. In March, damaged by Tet and the voter-popularity of Eugene McCarthy's anti-war platform, Lyndon Johnson decided not to stand for President again.

On 4 April, an ever-more radical Martin Luther King was gunned down in Memphis — there were now in 126 American cities. Student leader Rudi Dutschke was shot in Germany — he survived, but never recovered. Street and campus battles raged, in London, Rome, Toronto, Tokyo, Mexico, New York and San Francisco. On 5 June, Robert Kennedy was assassinated, having that same day likely secured in the California primary the Democratic nomination, and — perhaps — the Presidency that Johnson had laid down.

And so grimly on chaos everywhere, popular challenge, state clamp-down, events beyond easy listing. In August, Soviet tanks took Prague back from its dissidents — alienating Vaclav Havel's and successive generations forever. Days later, in Chicago — Czechago — Mayor Daley's police ran against anti-war protesters at a Democratic Convention in the grip of cynical machine politics. Between Chicago and Nixon's victory in November, American politics lost the trust of its rising generation, who turned instead to the Black Panthers, or Abbie Hoffman's prankish rock'n'roll revolutionaries the Yippies. Anywhere but the mainstream. In October, in Derry, a Catholic civil rights march was attacked by the (overwhelmingly Protestant) police: the first event in the resurgence of the Troubles'.

So what is it about May and Paris? It burst out of nearly nowhere — splinter-left student organisations resisting unjustified arrest — and simply grew, police overreaction fueling a wider and wider resentment. Until on certain days that May, more than a million citizens were in the streets: students, schoolkids, rank-and-file workers, passersby. And barricades of burnt-out cars in every highstreet. Part of the history is easy — a tradition of cultural revolt, anti-war Left bank-sim (*Algiers* was colonial France's Vietnam, Vietnam was France's Vietnam), the links between Sartre's existentialism and *nihilisme*, ancestor to modern Black Power/Pride movements. All this, and folk-memories of the French Revolution, the 1848 Revolution, the Paris Commune....



"The wind begins to howl..."

Bob Dylan/Jimi Hendrix, "All Along The Watchtower", 1968

When 'law' hurtles out of control (which is when order, as some began to think, reveals its true character), avant-gardes and traditions swap roles for a season. By the late 60s, two decades of postwar mythologising had persuaded a lot of people — especially young people — that obeying any authority without question was the very essence of fascism, that the socially responsible were really somehow the bad guys. Older heads, wiser or more timid, fought to find some blessed middle way between authority and its dismantling — but if it was there to be found, it was quite unlike anything you'd associate in quieter times with compromise. To bridge these extremes meant warping out into new dimensions.

Gusts of freedom had been clarion-hawing through jazz throughout the early 60s (see page 36). But Miles Davis, for all his addiction to change, had kept his distance from the former. Now his instinct for populist experiment was once more seizing him. He'd been listening to James Brown already, new wife Betty Mabry (coverstar of 1968's *Filles De Kilimanjaro*) turned him on to Hendrix. These two became his publicly stated twin gods, as he began the electronic odyssey away from chamber jazz towards the abyssal funk-murk and studio-headspace of his 70s sound. *Filles De Kilimanjaro*, however, is the uneasy moment of transition, pregnant with futures and pasts that for the moment only he heard.

Workcamps of radical experiment had been in operation in classical composition since the late 40s. But Karlheinz Stockhausen and Pierre Boulez, the enablers' temples most responsible, both actually took a May 68 vacation (not together). Stockhausen, after five days of ascetic meditation, returned with the cosmic improvisations of *Aus Den Seben Tagen*. Boulez went home to his birthplace, Saarland Ettener, to rethink the meaning of music.

None of these moves reflects pure reaction, pure radicality — it's that the mix of forward- and backward-looking ingredients alters sharply everywhere. Stockhausen and Boulez, visionary control-freaks both (as composers tend to be), were in fact profoundly unsettled by the implications of collective creativity, and hated the idea of an audience that no longer knew or kept in its place.

Miles, perhaps not unsettled, but certainly in search of what he knew not what, found the way forward that eluded the Darmstadt duo. Hearing James Brown's 1968 "Say It Out Loud, I'm Black I'm Proud" as a manifesto for black capitalism and cultural nationalism at their most implacable, both, was already marrying ideas others have almost always taken to be polar opposites. But he went further, and factored Hendrix into the heart of this alliance — Hendrix with his potent new language of noise and delicacy, brute force and languid androgynous grace. At which point, the old-and-

new black-and-white symbolic tensions and pole-reversals being used (and reflected in everything down to LP-titles *Axes Bold As Love* and *Electric Ladyland*) move into wholly unmapped, unsettled, untamed territory.

Similar reversals were happening all over. While Hubert Humphrey ran on a Democratic Presidential platform offering — bizarrely — the "politics of joy", many who embodied joy, the escapist pop of only months before, were suddenly mired in social realist ugliness and doomsday alertness, in the need for 'maturing', as artists, folk-politicians and people. The year that Radio One came on air was also the year that LP sales first outgrossed singles, and the year that 'rock opera' raised its sad head.

The Beatles were Gods in decline, diminished in the glare of possibilities they themselves ignited, judged wanting on terms they themselves set. In 1968 they emerged as 'artists' (as well as *The White Album*, George's Wonderwall soundtrack, John & Yoko's *You Are Here* exhibition and *Unfinished Music 1 — Two Virgins*), as entrepreneurs (the Apple label, first home of John Tavener's spirituality, James Taylor's scissipose, and fallible mortals (*Magical Mystery Tour*, the Maharsi trip, much of the above)).

The Rolling Stones recorded "Steerfighting Man" and "Sympathy For The Devil". The first was dedicated to Tang Ali and the Left Bank notaries, the second was said by Jagger to be in reaction to the punishment of the likes of Michael Abdul Malik — Michael X — when Enoch Powell, whose "Rivers Of Blood" speech was given in April, remained a respected figure in British mainstream politics (Jagger and Lennon both sparred with Ali's new magazine *Black Dwarf* throughout the summer).

Hendrix remade Dylan's "All Along The Watchtower", as instant heraldic prophecy, and became the station of choice (Radio Free Voodoo) for an increasingly disaffected grunt-army on the frontline in Vietnam. Dylan, though, had directed his unquiet drone back towards the most oblique symbolism: John Wesley Harding. His band The Band emerged from their country-retreat with *Music From Big Pink*, a record drenched in history, intimations of another century's Civil War, mortal moral struggle and its healing. The Byrds made their country LP *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo* and Van Morrison Astral Weeks. Tradition and avant-garde somehow fold across and through one another all year, the past and the private self, for once — for a while — co-conspirators with the most open-ended psychedelic (meaning sonic) possibility.

"Watch out for the guy who throws the first stone — he's an undercover cop."

Marchers' handout, Chicago, August 1968

Years before, sometime Situationist Alex Trocchi had foreseen *The Invisible Insurrection Of A Million Minds Confusedly (and visibly)*, this was the outcome. The new politics, in turning from the mainstream, insisted neither Washington nor Moscow — but there was no agreement on who or what



(or where) might take the place of Cold War certainties. Mao, Buddha, sex, dope, Scientology, the Third World, the inner mounting flame, total disengagement? For once Jan Wenner, editor of *Rolling Stone*, put the facts plainly: "The Yip protest — in method and means — is as corrupt as the political machine it hopes to disrupt," he wrote in mid-68. "Rock and roll is the only way in which the vast but formless power of youth is structured, the only way in which it can be defined or inspected."

Perhaps this signals a turn towards a kind of idiocy (though if it does, it just as surely raises the question of why such a secession from authority, civic reason, tradition, responsibility and the rest set in). Compare the way European philosophy plunged into the long dark night of post-structuralism, though, with its arcane jargon, its iconic gurus, its wholly coded utopianism and gleeful incoherence — surely a psychic shelter only a kiss away from the addictively energized and wilfully inarticulate buzz of rock.

It's become the thing to sneer at the naivety of the Peace And Love generation. What's so odd, this topsyturny year, is the joyless refusal — by so many successful Top Ten chart-ists — of business-as-usual mindless fun. Pop was dense with unhappy political dutifulness (the glum hopelessness of John and Yoko's bed-ins were only months away).

As a result, at the cutting edge of the avant-garde, away from the headlines and the star-names, engaged behaviour began to seem every bit as thinkingly half-baked. In June, The Nice had been burned from the Albert Hall for burning the American flag onstage. In November, Hans Werner Henze's oratorio *The Raft Of The Medusa* was not performed in Hamburg when the chorus objected to the posters of The stuck up all round the hall. Composers and conceptualists like Frederick Rzewski, Christian Wolff and Cornelius Cardew — intelligent experimentalists all, with appropriately tiny audiences — began to veer towards writing simple-minded folksong, really no more than Dylan-wannabe non-pop pop. Chart-action (to paraphrase Wenner) had become the only touchstone all the other fads had failed.

When Stockhausen retreated into his own private galaxy, his pupils were set free. Can — where two ended up — formed in June. "We began without any concept. Our only idea was to find a concept in making music all together spontaneously, in a collective way and without any leader," said one, Immin Schmidt, later. "We were never a normal rock group. Can was an anarchist community." Their first show included *musique concrète* tapes of Paris-in-May street-battles.

A section of *Aus Den Sieben Tagen* is titled "Set Sail For The Sun" — no one's yet proved a link with The Pink Floyd's "Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun", also recorded this year (they themselves attribute the title to a Burroughs novel). In 1968 they sacked their added seer and anarchic improvisor Syd Barrett. The Soft Machine (co-founder Daivid Allen a longtime tape-loop collaborator with proto-minimalist Terry Riley — their names came from a real Burroughs novel) were on tour with Hendrix

in the US all summer. (By way of inverted tribute, perhaps, they would later opt for a studiously becalmed rock-jazz.) Zappa's *Varèse'n blues* theatre of the absurd, Captain Beefheart's delirious surrealist delta-porn — *Troutmask Replica*, 1968 — passed on only their least upsetting features, the Magic Band's rattled complexities, the Mothers' sneery distance "Progressivism" in rock — even its improv-dominated psychedelic-experimental offshoots — would lose out to its own sales-pitch, the music of the "discerning adult" fashion-choice.

In New York, The Velvet Underground, with *White Light/White Heat*, were pumping LaMonte Young-style noise-minimalism through the "objective" repertoire of beatnik poetry, a format that would come to dominate white artrock's future — along with Albert Ayler's holy-unholy aesthetic, passed clumsily but completely through to Mt Iguana Pop and his Stooges. But Hendrix and Coltrane dominate non-art rock's future, degraded only on the surface, deepest spiritual guardians and (very) unacknowledged legislators of teen-refusal and slacker-yearning. Heavy Metal was born out of the (maximalist?) spirit of progressive soul-blues and the practice of the infinitely stretched-out solo. Cream (and VU's fellow New Yorkers The Vanilla Fudge) invented it and instantly folded — in 1968 — in a titan's war of egos (Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple arrived at once to take over).

And everything and their symbols become suddenly, inextricably tangled — till even assassination turns into mere gesture, when, in the first days of June, Valerie Solanas shoots Andy Warhol in the Factory, an extreme performance art flourish at once symbolic, personal, political, absurd and deadly, ushering real-life evil into the enchanted garden of the Global Pop-Art Inevitable.

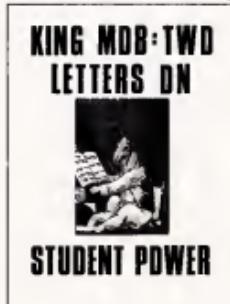
"Our ideas are in everybody's heads, and one day they'll come out!"
Situationalist Slogan

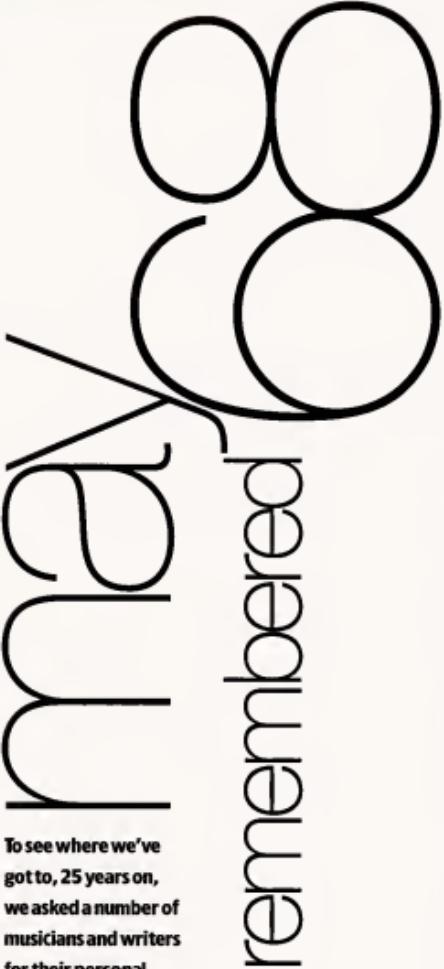
Boulez distanced himself from the student-actions in Paris by turning another situationist wall-slogan on its head — he wrote to a friend, sardonically, sadly, that imagination had clearly not seized power. If he's right, it's only because he needs so sharply delimited a definition of imagination for his own projects to make sense.

In Prague, Derry and Memphis the losses had been material, measurable political facts for recognisable communities. The audience, if you like, knew who they were what they wanted and whether they'd got it. In Paris, something else was happening. A half had been called to the everyday, for a palpable moment (it was six weeks before a chancery De Gaulle regained control). And called not by political forces, on any ordinary definition, but by an international "community", bohemian but huge, defined more by records, dress and pop — or Che — posters, by "culture", than by class or race or proper sociological category.

The audience hadn't just participated, they'd marched onto the stage, and made of themselves artists. "We knew as we did anything that month that it was entering history as we did it" marvelled a participant later. An imaginary community linked by a language defined (even today) more by its scrambled cutlessness, its teen-barbarian untranslateability, than the hoped-for generosity towards other voices and outside views. Subsequent disavowal — though a tedious constant today — is only truly a sign of how deeply participants believed things could be changed, and were being changed.

Other months were mostly about failure (the gains, if any, postponed) — but May was about this undefinable success, the brief but significant remaking of the possibilities of the self, a community and a language — or series of languages — still today in the process of becoming, resisted still but culturally remarkably far-reaching. Music, the advance guard of any new culture, was for a season powerfully and profoundly ambiguous, waiting for the words to come and the replacement order to settle. It's too early to say whether they have.





To see where we've got to, 25 years on, we asked a number of musicians and writers for their personal recollections or understanding of that turbulent time.

What was significant for me about that time was that I was considerably older than people I was working with, usually by ten years. Unless you were 38 in '68, you don't know what ageism means! Culturally, I can't understand why '68 has become such a focal point; for me, music was more active in the mid '60s. But I met a lot of new people around that time, different sorts of musicians to the ones I'd been working with before. Not necessarily better players, but they had this open, comprehensive view of music that was a revelation to me. I'm talking about people like Evan Parker, Han Bennink, Paul Rutherford, Willem Breuker. It was an odd time, looking back, 1958 seems to have more relevance to today than 1968. The '60s were an odd aberration, the idea that it was a golden age for new music is one that I can't subscribe to. Overall, things are better now.

DEREK BAILEY, musician

May 1968 heralded my 15th year. Girology was yet to feature. O levels were breathing down my neck as I wrestled with Molere. Paris and Vietnam featured heavily in the news, but a birthday present of a sparkling new guitar overshadowed them. Coupled with a change of address featuring a large enough basement to hold band rehearsals, heaven seemed close by. Armed with 33, 45 and 78 rpm volumes of music I immersed myself in Hendrixism, Staxonomics, and caught Motownitis. Due to Dad's vinyl habit I became exposed to the contagious rhythms of Jamaica, as The Skatalites and The Wailers blasted out of his powerful sound system. Also a fan of The Equals, Stones, Beatles and Cream, I'd decided it was time to test out the newly built recording studio at school with my compositional skills, demoing songs that were later to be featured on the best of *Moomba* album Spooky Tooth, Free and, of course, the Master BB King were more reasons why I had to become a professional musician.

DENNIS BOVELL, musician

The revolution that might have been for me centred around Chris McGregor and the great musicians who came with him from South Africa—Mongezi Feza, Dudu Pukwana, Louis Moholo, Johnny Dyani. I made an rather naive attempt at managing them at the time, having produced a couple of records of the Sextet and Trio. Those evenings at Ronnie Scott's Old Place in Gerard Street and the sessions for numerous recording projects, many of which never saw the light of day, haunt me still. Britain seemed totally unprepared for the intensity of musicianship that came pouring out of them. Britain's (and my) failure to provide a working living for that group always struck me as one of the great tragedies of music in this country. They are all dead now, save Louis, and the thought of the lightweight stuff we all raved about then compared to the divine inspiration which poured from those men makes me humble and sad. I guess there must be some connection between France's ability to shake its establishment far more profoundly than Britain ever did and its ability to make a home and provide a platform for Chris McGregor.

JOE BOYD, producer

Elsewhere... Paul Bley was in Seattle for concerts (and an excellent album—*Mr Joy* on Mercury). In New York that complex organisation The Jazz Composers Orchestra was recording a couple of Michael Mantler's monoliths, "Communications" (numbers nine and ten, featuring Larry Coryell and Roswell Rudd respectively). I was reviewing Coltrane's *Expressions* album, having finished a far-too-long piece on Miltord Graves (but he liked it) and watching the events on telly. Throughout the decade it had been available city (the summers of 61 and 63 were pretty lively if you were there). Hank Mobley was back home too, after a stunning gig at the Cafe Montmartre in Copenhagen.

JACK COOKE, writer



Lindsay Cooper

In January, on a boat going to West Africa, I met Desmond Tay, the Ghanaian master drummer, and heard African music for the first time. The experience was to change my life. The Paris events of May passed me by, I was in the suburbs, playing in amateur orchestras and winning a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music. In August I went to hear Rostropovich perform the Dvorak cello concerto with the Russian State Orchestra. The Russians had invaded Czechoslovakia that morning and shouts of protest drowned the opening bars. Suddenly world events drew my attention, I began to reflect that there might be a connection between art and politics. In September, having postponed the scholarship, I went to Dartington College of Arts, an appropriate place for a 17-year-old who has realised that there is far more to being a musician than playing bassoon in an orchestra.

LINDSAY COOPER, musician

In 1968 the contemporary music scene was much smaller than today — everyone knew everyone else. Moving to London in the summer of 67 I quickly became involved in a variety of activities — such as founding, at Goldsmiths' College, the first electronic music studio in Higher Education, and organising concerts at the Arts Lab in Drury Lane. Such optimism, damped by the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 68, lasted until 1973. 1968 was the year I started out in the several creative areas in which I still work,

different approaches to music were featured in three new compositions presented in March. Most important was the premiere in July of my first fully-fledged invented amplified instrument, *Shozyo* (built in May or June).

HUGH DAVIES, musician

I remember it distinctly because my son was one year old and I'd started working with a few different bands again after having him — getting a toe back in the water. I got a call from a group called Delivery, which was Lol Coxhill, Steve and Phil Miller and Roy Babington. They did a lot of blues, backing visiting American blues singers and they wanted their own singer. Of all the blues bands in London they were the oddest, which was inevitable with Lol involved. The first gig I had to go to Marble Arch tube and wait for the van. When it arrived I was despatched down into the tube and told to yell "Lol", who was down there busking. I stayed with the group for about two or three years. A lot of people who were around in May 68, if you ask them what they were doing it's going to be a bit hazy, because a lot of hallucinogenics were being imbibed at that time and memory is rather ragged. But that's what I remember.

CAROL GRIMES, singer



Carol Grimes

1968, May, I was still in Japan 10 years prior to coming to England. I was in high school. Japanese education has a frightful reputation but I was having a very good time as I didn't study.

We heard about the French

revolution, but the media report said the reason for this uproar is because the boys in the boys dormitory in Sorbonne University wanted to be allowed to enter the girls' dormitory. We were very impressed by the fact that the people were turning cars upside down and destroying the buildings for such a sweet reason. The boys and girls in our high school always went out as groups. Both were happy within the same sex group, occasionally having an "intersex" conversation about which train to take or whether we brought nice balls or not. I couldn't imagine our boys making such an effort as those French boys to be with us. One year later our school caught up with the student uproar against the US-Japan treaty which was due to be renewed in 1970. We had a big barricade in the school and we didn't have classes for almost two months. In the end we had a Japanese Defence Army inside the school. We were the first school to have the army, so the newspapers reported the incident, but they said our reason was to stop the annual athletic meeting. We were rather insulted. Now I wonder if it was a problem with the Japanese media.

KAZUKO HOHKI, Frank Chicken

So, Paris went up. But 'trouble' in Czechoslovakia seemed more important. Rumour was that the Yugoslav border was shutting, so we had to get out fast, a premature end to my first visit to 'my fatherland'. The ferry back would be across similarly stormy waters (I spew everywhere). Was it just to evade the misery that — a child — I found comfort in the Duty Free Shop? The roar and reverberation of the ship's engine, the smashing and clinking of tins and bottles shaken by the stir of a particularly choppy Channel I didn't yet know, but this was my introduction of the teachings of John Cage. It fascinated me. Yes, any sound could be musical.

DAVID ILIC, writer

May 1968, and I'd just achieved my ambition — a job in a London

bookshop. I was never a very ambitious fellow. The shop was Indica, sometime home of the International Times and purveyor of the best in contemporary poetry — that was the main appeal to me. The staff was a fairly radical bunch, and I was overawed. I remember one day when I was tidying the books on the top shelf, and a couple of colleagues were enthusing over what was going on in Paris — cars in flames, paving stones tore up, not police running scared and amok and the rest, and I remember thinking "that's not revolution, that's just destroying property." But then came the real revolution, I anticipate still being at the top of a ladder, tidying books. I know my place.

NICK KIMBERLEY, writer

1968 only exists as newsreel chaos footage with feedback, a missed moment reconstructed years after in the dark with Godard movies and Fassbinder anti-theater texts. Of the music bonding the age's broken pieces, Jefferson Airplane's binds best. The most Haight-full of SF groups, their politically spiked acid cocktails were swallowed in great draughts in the German communities that birthed Kraut/space rock, RAF, Alternative Lise, who lived out the contrary spirit of 68 longest. After Boiling At Boxers is J.A.'s most musically, if not politically, ambitious record. Avery raga rhythms funnel a concussive polyphony of voices, ringing guitar distortions, feedbacking and spiced tape/song chatter in ways that anticipate 1969 fetishes. Sonic Youth

BIBA KOPF, writer

I had just made a film, *The Love Of Ivy*, with Sydney Portier. He was number one in the world then and that was the first time in America that an Afro-American actor had been in that position. The premiere of the film was in upstate New York and Bobby Kennedy came. I watched all the gains of the 60s come to a head in 1968. A climate had been created in American music by the Civil Rights

PHOTO: DAVID ILIC



movement, Roberta Flack came out with "Compared To What" and James Brown released "Say It Loud, I'm Black And I'm Proud." I had introduced African hairstyles for women, trying to promote pride in our own image and likeness. Suddenly it felt like we were free, that it was going to be a whole different world. After that came the 70s, when people thought they could get away with anything in



Abbey Lincoln

films, and musicians and comedians started cursing on stage — the 70s were a time of great irreverence. In the 60s I'd done benefits for the NAACP and Malcolm X; I never met Dr King but when I heard of his death I grieved. We all grieved for his spirit.

ABBEY LINCOLN, singer/actress

One fantasy — simple enough to put into practice, really — summed up the year for me. In a public place, a crowd gathers. Maybe a march is about to start, maybe something rougher. The cops are already in place. I can still feel them rocking back and forth on their heels, while on the other side, the side I'm on, people in the front line stare straight ahead while behind them everyone wanders back and forth waiting. It's a really a minute or a week away from now, nobody knows what's going to happen next. And then, over an impossible powerful PA, some madman puts on "Sympathy For The Devil," and all hell breaks loose.

GREIL MARCUS, writer

Public events and private milestones rarely coincide, and the

epochal year of 1968 is no exception. It became a momentous one in retrospect as my own interests, particularly in American arts and culture, developed over the next decade, but at the time it was just big things happening all around, while adolescent life went on as normal. One crucial experience which I mean little at the time but would ultimately have a huge effect on me, however, was that sometime in the summer of 1968, I knowingly heard the playing of John Coltrane for the first time, on a dubiously battered copy of *A Love Supreme*, on an equally dubious Dansette (ask your mum). It was to be some time before it impacted fully — my ears and heart were still shackled to Cream and Hendrix, Beatles and Stones, but without quite knowing it, I had planted a little delayed action bomb of my own.

KENNY MATHIESON, writer

My grandmother's tiny black-and-white TV delivered les événements in frozen tea-time proportions, skinny kids, psycho cops (the worst), white helmets and baton charges in the water, cannons, Bataclan, yes, and grim Herself tutted mightily, as they do in Ulster (our easter-to-August home) at the violent foibles of other races. On the third or fourth night, there was a huge thud and the teacups bounced like miniature porcelain corps. I jumped and slopped a sticky teardrop of Cydona on the table. "That must have been Bessbrook Barracks," said Herself, specifying a legitimate military target some eight miles away. Through the curtains, though, we could see the flames 100 meters away, consuming indifferently the local TA hall and Powder Puff/hair/cocktail and "beautician's" (sic) upstairs.

Everything around was wet from the hoses, and the gathering faces were not white and martyr-like, but red and shiny with anger and self-satisfaction. Back home in Dunoon, the American service families put photos of Dr King and RFK (black and white again) in their windows.

BRIAN MORTON, writer

1968 was the year I got my first exposure to improvised music. Before I'd sung bebop with Dennis



Maggie Nichols

Rose. Then I started becoming aware of the musicians that had come to London from South Africa — Chris McGregor, Dudu Pukwana, Mongezi Feza, and others. The British jazz scene had become very stylised by the mid-60s and these people, along with the Black American musicians that played here, had an explosive impact. I remember The Old Place, which was like a womb of experiment. I saw Mike Westbrook there and I said I can hear voices fitting into this. Everyone thought I was mad but I heard all these horns raging and I wanted to sing like that.

Then I heard Norma Winstone singing with John Stevens and Trevor Watts and that was very influential in getting me involved with the SME. The period was a turning point in many ways. I really believe the music we were making reflected the political upheavals that were going on — it didn't exist in a vacuum. Black Power, the Vietnam protests, the beginning of the Lesbian and Gay movement and the Women's movement; all these things provided a context for the incredible developments that were going on in the music.

MAGGIE NICKOLS, singer

Just returned from first visit to USA, where we had tea and an interminable impromptu performance from LaFonte Young, which lasted three hours. It might have been longer had (composer) Ben Paterson not rescued us. We're back, playing at

the Anti-University Of London and then a concert (somehow) at the OEH (enemy territory?). Cornelius Cardew brought Morton Feldman along to a session. Morton was on his way to "Wolverton" (he meant Wolverhampton). We warned him it could be no picnic. Next we heard he'd run away after one day but left his shoes behind! The re-release of The Crypt Concert is planned for June, which we had to record. Prepared for a performance of Spirals at the Commonwealth Institute and we started playing at the Arts Lab. It's still like reinventing music every time we play. It can't last. There is hardly time to think about it. That's good!

EDDIE PREVOST, AMM

Discography and synchronicity agree that the May 68 album was *Machine Gun* by Brötzmann, Brecker, Evan, et al. Are musicians that are closely influenced by events around them? I'm inclined to give them the benefit of the doubt, but of course no one heard the results until later. The April 68 gunshot that killed Martin Luther King was more important, requiring Archie Shepp and much early black music as an antidote. Live, I remember an all-star R&B concert in May giving an opening set of less than 15 minutes (the back-of-the-bus syndrome) to the only black majority group on the bill, the Chris McGregor Sextet.

BRIAN PRIESTLEY, writer

Remembering the Spring of '68

Every few years

1789

1848

Every few years

1871

1905

Every few years

1917 &

1968 too

the masses
have tried
to bring a new
economic
order to their
throes

ED SANDERS, The Fugs

**Spontaneous Poem on
the Spring of '68**

The thrill of the not
Running through the streets
Weeping & angry from tear gas
Thinking up banners
that remain banners
for all eternity

of equality
and sharing
and stripping money from the
overly rich

Setting the tone
for all time

Those posters a legacy
Those
Kisses at the barricades

Throwing it up
the State for grabs
& determined
with blood & guts
not to let it
fall to right wing nuts

The bread of Paris
baked by Polis-run biz
It made sense-

The "leadership"
entrenched
in the Left & the Right
forming a silent, unhallowed
alliance

"Don't change things too much"

"Don't lose control"

"We'll die soon"

"Buy cheap, sell dear"

"Remember the Terror"

"Don't risk our pensions"

"The masses are asses"

"Comfort"

ED SANDERS, again

I can remember the time vividly, because May 1968 was when I organised the first Music Now concerts in London which featured

AMM, Musica Elettronica Viva, Christian Wolff and Terry Riley and La Monte Young, who were more or less unheard of in the UK at the time. AMM played at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, which wasn't just well attended but brilliantly performed. MEV were a classical improvisation group featuring Alvin Curran, Richard Teitelbaum and Fredric Rzewski, and were better known in retrospect than at the time. I was particularly proud of the Wolff concert because some years earlier John Cage had said that what music needs is a whole concert devoted to Wolff's music and this was the first one. Apart from AMM the concerts took place round the back of the ICA building on the Mall, which hadn't been finished at the time of the concerts. There was a Georgian terrace which housed various ministry offices and quangos.

The whole of that area of London was being renovated at the time and the concerts took place in huge, deserted, bombed-out hall — totally unfurnished. It was just an empty space and it felt like performing in a bomb shelter. Those concerts were the beginning of many years of musical activity for Music Now.

VICTOR SCHONFIELD, concert organiser

I was heavily involved with CND. I was doing a lot of street things, protest marches, benefits. I seemed to be doing more of that kind of stuff than actual straightforward gigs with the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, which formed in 1965 and was my main musical concern at the time. In the late 60s the music press seemed more interested in exploring the relationship that musicians were making between their music and political issues. I remember the NME published a big picture of me banging a gong on some march.

I was always being asked about my opinion on political issues. Looking back, I was a very enthusiastic, purist type of person. Energy levels were very high. The 60s were a very fertile soil, but in

retrospect I'd have to say that although the surface of the time seemed very liberating, right wing forces were always waiting in the wings to take over if things went too far. And obviously that's eventually what happened.

JOHN STEVENS, drummer



John Stevens

May 68 was the first occasion on which I had the opportunity to organise a musical event. This was my first year as an art student, fortunately at Hornsey College of Art where the events in Paris were having a knock-on effect. The student sit-in at Hornsey may have wrecked my chances of a more orthodox art school career, but what first year student could resist all-day seminars, all-night film shows or telephone calls from John Lennon? Just before the sit-in, I had shared a work table with Stuart and Jane Marshall, who had introduced me to the work of LaMonte Young. They were under the impression that jazz meant Kenny Ball, so I introduced them to Ornette Coleman's *This Is Our Music*. A student occupation gave us an opening to launch some of these musical enthusiasms onto a wider world. I planned a concert which could embrace free jazz, minimalist gong bowing and activist rock bands such as Mick Farren's Social Deviants. On the day of the concert, Buckminster Fuller appeared at the college to present a lecture. The demand to hear him exceeded expectations and my preparations for the concert — specially installed projection

screens etc — were torn down. I stormed off in disgust. What did care about geodesic domes? So much for the spirit of '68.

DAVID TOOP, writer

A key year for drummers. It started with Philly Joe Jones settling in Hampstead, ended with Sunny Murray booted off the stage in Hammersmith. Santal styles reflected percussion's glorious multiplicity. Rashied Ali arrived in three-piece chocolate suit and tie to play with John Stevens. Edward Blackwell wore a turtleneck accompanying Ornette and Yoko Ono. Jazz Expo at Hammersmith Odeon had the ultimate line-up — and wardrobe. Elvin in orange corduroy. Bahauan in woolen dansk. Max Roach in navy pinstripe. All played like demons. Then Sunny Murray, the enfant terrible in African print, mouth open, wailing and flailing. He amused Philly Joe who stood in the wings with his sticks and superior smile, later they'd record together. Some of the audience threw missiles, one narrowly missing me. "Come on now!" they demanded. Others, unified by Murray's shimmering cymbals, dashed forward to cheer him on. The jury was out, but the new music was here.

VAL WILMER, photographer

From May through August 1968, I was allowed to use the small ski chalet belonging to the brother of then New York mayor John Lindsay. I remember not how that came to be in order to write a book about junkies in Harlem, already researched. *The Silent Sound Of Needles* (now remaindered). I rented a TV set and sat on my peaceful off-season mountain writing, now and then being fed by Art Blakey's ex-wife who lived nearby. In between I watched socialism lose its human face in Prague, the students on the streets in Paris, the Chicago Democratic Convention and the murder of Robert Kennedy and, if I remember correctly, of Martin Luther King. "Gee whiz," I thought. "It's pretty weird up here."

MIKE ZWERIN, writer/musician

Since the 60s, critics have tried to separate Free Jazz from the radical politics the musicians embraced. Ben Watson looks at Freedom in the music of 1968, from Archie Shepp to Anthony Braxton, and argues that the politics are still to the point. Val Wilmer's photos seize the moment.

The past is always shaped by our idea of the present. Now that jazz has been hijacked by a black middle class intent on proving its adherence to elitist notions of excellence and discipline, it's common to look on the late-60s linkage between Free Jazz and revolution as some kind of sentimental aberration. Actually it's one of the few examples of an overlap between politics and art that is more than the utterance of pious wishes. When trying to select classical pieces to celebrate May 68, BBC Radio Three programmers found that precious few works actually premiered in 1968 seemed to partake of its spirit. Classical composition is about as likely to evoke the spirit of 68 as personnel-management theory or prison design. Classical music wavers between utopian premonition of social tremors and institutionalised recuperation, neither are geared to instant recognition of contemporary events. Improvisation grants to jazz a synchronicity which classical music — depending as it does on a fully rationalised (capitalist) division of labour — lacks (because the separate roles of designer/composer, entrepreneur/conductor and worker/musician require long-term planning). As early as the 50s the internationalism of Darmstadt (the hotbed of post-war classical innovation) anticipated some of the politics of May 68, but jazz was far better equipped to register the impact of the événements in the here-and-now.

The Black Revolution in Jazz had been brewing for some time already. In 1964 a series of concerts held in New York's Cellar Café had been dubbed *The October Revolution* (a reference to 1917 in Russia). The 40s had seen the birth of the first black musical avantgarde, Bebop. In between, the 50s had been a time of consolidation, as both mainstreamers and tyros absorbed Charlie Parker's innovations. It was the freeing up of harmonic organisation, the introduction of dissonance, chaos and sheer noise, that characterised the cutting-edge of the 60s. By 1968 the music sounded to shocked listeners like an expression of the same forces that were sweeping the streets in protest against the Vietnam War and occupying the factories and colleges of Paris. Appropriately enough, it was called Free Jazz. Its two motivating forces were Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane.

But by May, Coltrane had been nine months dead, and Ornette was resting after one of his most subversive forays into the unexpected. In 1966 he had recorded an album, *The Empty Forkhole* (Blue Note), with his ten-year-old son Denardo at the drums, challenging every contemporary tenet of professionalism and appropriate skill. In 1968, perhaps to reassure the critics, he made two albums for Blue Note with Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison: after their four-year tenure in

the fire last



Braxton in Val Wilmer's
mother's kitchen,
South London



Shepp in his
own kitchen,
New York

time

Coltrane's mid-60s "classic" quartet they were acknowledged as the best rhythm section in modern jazz. The music (*New York Is Now, Love Call*) is fine, but it is not ground-breaking. May 68 was not reflected in every note played that year, even those played by its revolutionaries.

Nonetheless, the two musicians most given to overt political statement at this time were Ornette's longtime (white) bassist, Charlie Haden, and Coltrane's protégé, tenor saxist Archie Shepp. In 1969 Haden would form his Liberation Music Orchestra, playing revolutionary anthems and his own compositions, including "Song For Che" (dedicated to iconic freedom-fighter Che Guevara). In 1971 Haden would cause an uproar in Lisbon — still under military rule — by dedicating a song to black liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies of Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau — but in 1968 he was more involved with counselling addicts after his own heroin cure at the Synanon Foundation.

Shepp was far better placed to participate in the revolutionary current. He had already submitted an article to *downbeat* declaring his support for Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro — and received a phone call from editor Dan Morgenstern. "This article frightens me!" His saxophone, Shepp said, was like a machine gun in the hands of the Viet Cong: "We are only an extension of that entire civil rights-Black Muslims-black nationalist movement that is taking place in America. That is fundamental to the music." Voicing such opinions did not make Shepp popular with club-owners and record companies; in his crucial book *Black Nationalism & the Revolution In Music* (1970) Frank Kofsky argues that other musicians were afraid to express themselves similarly in case it damaged their careers.

But Shepp went down a storm in Europe, where young audiences identified with his militancy (both political and artistic). Politics and art are a highly volatile mixture, and it would prove impossible for him to keep up his onslaught on the white bourgeoisie. The explosion of record sales brought about by rock saw jazz attempting to emulate such success with fusion, and retreating from confrontation. It is not so much the paradox of there being only a "white" audience for Free Jazz as there being no audience at all, beyond a circle of fellow creators (the most important music has appeared on musician-run labels). This may explain why Shepp has latterly become notorious for lazy, uncommitted gigs (although he always reveals enough of his glorious tone to prove he is not finished yet). By the mid-70s Free Jazz became another avantgarde locked into social possibilities that had been closed down.

Still, there are always the records. In 1968, Free Jazz hadn't yet developed its subsequent defensiveness and hurt. Shepp sounds as if he's com-

municating. His late 60s groups are a high point in jazz for torrid ferocity. The hard-to-find *The Way Ahead*, recorded for Impulse! in 1968, uses the abrasive physicality of the blues to protest the exploitation of jazz as night club anaesthesia. Like Hendrix introducing a live "Machine Gun" two years later at the Fillmore East, Shepp connects US imperialism abroad with police war on blacks in the ghetto. In May the notorious CRS — the Parisian riot Police — gave French students and workers a taste of the same. Small wonder connections were made, and not just between Algeria and Vietnam, or that Shepp's music communicated.

Liberation movements are ever controversial, just as Louis Armstrong's bravura could — in the light of bebop cool — come to seem like ingratiating showbiz, so Archie Shepp's black consciousness could be turned into seem a stigma. Since art deals with symbols it is always susceptible to ideological inversion, to being turned inside out, and Kofsky's enthusiasm for Shepp needs to be put alongside Anthony Braxton's scepticism about "black power" jazz (as reported to Graham Lock in his book *Forces In Motion*). Braxton views the association of the black musician with sweat and crudeness and swagger as a racist imposition, the adoption of "blackness" a double-edged sword: as much a restriction as a source of pride. As an improviser with a keen interest in composition, Braxton finds he is frequently frustrated by assumptions about black music and its supposedly spontaneous, earthy attributes (he also hints that declarations of racial solidarity could conceal careerism and competition). But it should be pointed out that despite Shepp's essentialist rhetoric about "blackness", he is a composer of considerable skill: his blunted notes and dying sighs are brilliantly foregrounded in his arrangements.

Though Shepp and Braxton stand at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum as regards the rhetoric of colour, in the late 60s music of each you can hear a parallel rawness, a sonic pregnancy. Commentators insist on calling this kind of music "abstract", but its conviction that sound itself can carry a message gives a utopian vision of the possibilities of the material world. Braxton's first album, *Three Compositions Of New Jazz* (Delmark), was recorded in Spring 1968. John Litweiler's sleeve-note begins with a quote from the leader: "We're on the eve of the complete fall of Western ideas and life-values."

Braxton's *For Alto* (Delmark), also recorded in 1968, is one of his most intense records — four sides of crying, pleading, exorcising a capella alto saxophone, but the real fruits of May 68 appear in the extraordinary record he made in Paris the next year. In July 1969 many of the American free players attended a festival in Tangiers, a gesture of pan-Africanism that alerted the musicians to the colonial legacy of France and its continuing economic exploitation of Algeria. Many of them ended up in Paris, recording for Actuel an amazing set of records, by turns terrifying, brilliant and upsetting. Braxton's *This Time* (BYG/Actuel) includes street recordings — cars rev their engines, buses roll past — that have an extraordinary sense of urban expectancy: here we are, what shall we do with these materials? If there is one record that parallels the wide-open creativity of the May occupations, it is this.

Rock also registered les événements, most palpably in the music of Hendrix and the Stones. The gulf between the trippiness of *Sgt Pepper* (mid 1967) and realism of *The White Album* (late 1968) is testimony to the impact of Paris and London street-battles. But though the music was harder to find, the politics of 1968 were more tellingly registered in Free Jazz than in rock. Michael Mantler, Noah Howard and Peter Brotzmann each brought contrasting backgrounds to the idea of a music that could blow down the restrictions of tradition.

Mantler, classically trained, recorded *Communications* (JCOA) in New York the very week of the Sorbonne events, with some of the leading lights of Free Jazz (Cecil Taylor, Pharoah Sanders, Gato Barbieri, Roswell Rudd).



Shepp went down a storm in Europe, where audiences identified with his militancy.



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Among the international highlights, New York's classic harpist Zeena Parkins and cyberpunk size-wizare sans Elliott Sharp - plus Britain's The Smith Quartet, pressuring Sharp's "Digital" for prepared string ensemble; Germany's prodigious percussionist Peter Hollinger, working in an installation by French sculptor Michelle Barette; NYC's extraordinary (and extraordinarily loud) noise-virtuosica Barbetomagus; Swiss vocal pyrotechnician Dorothea Schurz in a new quartet with Australian hurdy-gurdy, flute and keys players Stevie Wishart, Jim Denly & Jamie Fielding; plus Germany's rising reeds prodigies Regine Postuszky and Georgia Hoppe.

*From Britain, the Festival boasts some of the key figures of the contemporary scene and some wild newcomers: fresh from "Oh Masson", Lindsay Cooper, in a trio with vocal dynamo Maggie Nicols and French accordionist Michelle Barette; the extraordinary pioneering free jazz tremoloist Paul Rutherford; pianist Mervyn Afrika in an exquisite duo with vocalise Pinise Soul; the head-to-head assault & battery of Steve Noble and Paul Barrell on mirror draw-kit; Gathering Contradictions, the anarchic shtick-in-big-band that drums on and distills the cream of the country's free improvisers; Trian, the new improv combo of Marco Mattos, Ian Smith and Simon Waterford; music theatre and table-slapping trio Zig-a-Zag. Plus, extending the musical horizon a little further still, new complexity works by Dillon and Barrett showcased by Ian Pace; Richard Benjafield playing *Rasputi* - on flower pots; and Roger Heaton premiering works by Ferneyhough and Gorecki.*

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achieving music of a power and intensity that puts the improvising experiments of art composers like Cardew and Stockhausen to shame.

Far from finding events in Paris insignificant or irrelevant, black Americans could easily relate to the protests of the workers and students. The spectacle of an imperialist European power about to be toppled from below is an inspiration to anyone fighting oppression elsewhere. Nathan Davis, the tenor saxophonist who played for Art Blakey and Kenny Clarke (he also pioneered the inclusion of jazz in the syllabus at the music department of Pittsburgh University in the 70s), was in Paris in May 68. He commented: "The black people in the States had aroused the consciousness of people all over the world, including the young French and the young Germans and the rest of Europe. They looked at the States and they supported the civil rights movement. They started a snowball effect."

This shows a better understanding of the underlying dynamic — the international dimension — of May than many subsequent commentaries. US civil rights protests played a crucial role in showing the youth of Europe that action could bring a halt to the capitalist regime. As the voice of Black America (part of the working class of the most dynamic capitalist economy of all), jazz was peculiarly well placed to register the aspirations of oppressed people throughout the globe. Black South Africans for example, looked to Malcolm X — they also played jazz. You can find explicit political statements by Haden and Shepp, but it is in the very sound of Free Jazz that you can hear the revolution's suffering and anger and hope.

It was this quality that caused jazz enthusiast Roy Morris to buy the rights to a recording trumpetist Noah Howard made in November 1968. Howard had recorded with Ayler in 1964, supplying the composition "Witches & Devils" for Spots. In 1969 Morris set up a cassette-only label in order to release it. Called Signals, the album is a beautiful example of the poignancy Free Jazz is capable of, much superior to Ayler's own dabblings with rock at this time. The musicians appear to float in an exalted musical ether, held together emotion alone, emphasizing the manner in which jazz musicians prize an individualized sound. Furthermore, one track is titled "Burn, Baby, Burn" after a famous slogan coined during the Watts Riots of 1965 — the musicians want to make explicit the link between their musical liberty and the activities of rioters.

Nowadays the Free Jazz of the 60s, the music of famous names like Albert Ayler as well as obscure figures like Noah Howard, has disappeared from popular accounts, relegated to a marginal category called "free improvisation". With the current emphasis on 50s and early 60s styles, people could be forgiven for thinking that Coltrane only ever played like Braxton



If there's one record that parallels the creativity of May 68, it's Braxton's *This Time*.

Marsalis and never recorded albums like Ascension or Sun Ship (both 65) or *Live in Japan* (66, all Impulse!). This kind of rewriting of history seems to go along with political accounts that forget to mention Stokely Carmichael or turn Malcolm X into an exemplary "achieve" from the ghetto instead of the revolutionary firebrand — hated by Leonard Feather, hated by the NAACP, hated by Louis Farrakhan — that he actually was.

The rage of Free Jazz was revolutionary and it's because of this that its relevance is not restricted to those on the receiving end of racism. The new black middle class — who want jazz to stand as their ticket to respectability — need to suppress the memory of Free Jazz precisely because, as it makes jazz universal, it destroys their own special pleading. When Stanley Crouch dismisses all fusion and free players as "decadent" (*Sleevencote to Discemment*, by Terence Blanchard and Donald Harrison, 1988), it is time to reach for *Machine Gun* not Hendrix this time, but Peter Brötzmann's historic recording of May 1968. This record, self-recorded and self-produced, was sold from gig to gig and finally led to the formation of FMP — Free Music Production — which continues today as a beacon for loud, temperate, creative music. It has recently been re-issued on CD (on FMP), along with Steve Lake's sparkly appreciation from *The Wire* 13). This band collected together musicians who were to shape the creative music of the next decade. Willem Breuker, Han Bennink, Peter Kowald, Evan Parker, Peter Brötzmann: Europe's one-man jazz revolution.

Despite all the later achievements by those involved, there is something special about *Machine Gun*. Crudely recorded, it sounds as if something — everything — is bursting, collapsing, being pulverised: one of those rare moments where art seems absolutely in touch with social events. The political hopes of 1968 were to be drowned in a welter of false promises and compromise. In May, when the students and workers of Paris moved into occupation and the Sorbonne committee sent their telegram to the Maoist regime in Peking — "Shake in your shoes, bureaucrats!" — they made clear that revolutionary youth viewed the "choice" between free-market capitalism and communist state-capitalism as an ideological con. But the Communist Party refused to countenance the occupations and sponsored a return to work — this marked the beginning of its demise as a credible voice for the working class in Western Europe. As a result, May '68 also put the New Left on the map, by (re)connecting revolutionary Marxism with working class politics, anti-racism and internationalism, and not totalitarian oppression. An insight once restricted to intellectuals (Adorno, Marcuse, isolated Trotskyists) — the idea that building "socialism" in one country inevitably recreated the essential features of capitalism — suddenly became both obvious and accessible. Ordinary people could seize power, break with obedience at work and passive acceptance of the lies of the mass media, create a genuine internationalism such dazzling potential lit the world in a flash that had not been experienced since 1917 and the Russian revolution.

Movements that seek to supersede politics as a way of acting on the world are incapable of crystallising global moments. The small-press rants and "subversive" actions of sub-Situationists, anarchists (Fluxus, Art Strike, mail art, free improvisation, postmodern consumer ideologists, Buddhists) seem smallscale, and never reach out far enough: they strut and post-pose, but only to those who seek them out. In *Machine Gun* — once we move it from the free improvisation ghetto to its original context — we can hear something bigger: the anguish and joy of May 68 unmediated by the self-serving cynicism of later commentaries as they ditch revolutionary politics for academic and media careers. Like all great music — from John Coltrane to the Sex Pistols — it challenges you to like it, to choose sides, to participate. □

This is a version of the broadcast Ben Watson is giving (with examples from the records) on Radio Three, May 2, in the four part Music in Our Time series on May 68 (see Sounding Off). Signals is available from 24 Riverside Gardens, Newport-on-Tay, Fife, DD6 8NQ, Scotland.

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THE BROWNS 1993



In the 60s, a decade when new electronic technology expanded hugely, transforming the possibilities in music forever, the American composer Alvin Lucier was a pioneer of its exploration. Geoff Smith and Nicola Walker Smith discuss acoustics, theatre and the humble triangle with him.

amplified

alvin Lucier, born in 1931, was — with Robert Ashley, Gordon Mumma and David Behrman — a member of the Sonic Arts Union in the mid-60s, a Cage-inspired group influential in itself, for its dedication to live electronic music in composition and performance. Lucier, perhaps the most adventurously experimental of the four, pioneered many electronic techniques, from the use of greatly amplified brainwaves to early versions of the vocoder and digital sampling. By no means explicitly political, his work nonetheless reflects some of the public dramas of the times: a piece like 1968's *Chambers*, for example, devoted as much to the theatrical exploration of the sound-spaces it's performed in as to any more conventional musical considerations, allows the outside "non-musical" world as great a playing part as the composer or musicians. Elsewhere the sounds of the body or the acoustic properties of inert materials are allowed similar presence. (The 60s being the 60s, he also once wrote an arrangement of "Strawberry Fields" for piano, teapot and miniature sound-system.)

What do you think is the difference between a demonstration of acoustics in a physics class and a piece of music?

Well, that's a hard one. I guess part of it is the intent, and if the intent is an artistic one then probably how you will execute it will show that. That's a funny thing to say and a funny way of saying it. But, for example, the piece that's inside here [*Chambers*], where the sounds of larger environments are put in smaller environments — that could be thought of as an acoustic demonstration of the filtering effects of different sized enclosures, but chances are a scientist would never do it that way. He would think it isn't the clearest way to show the phenomena. But *Chambers* brings other things in, non-scientific things. For example, the idea of recording the Kolin Bahnhof and putting it in a whimsical part of that. I enjoyed doing that because so many composers who've gotten into the idea of recording environments have used such complexity — many microphones and many channels to record that same railroad station and they've taken it very seriously. I did, too, but then I put it in a thimble so most of the acoustics are lost. It's an old piece actually. I did *Chambers* in 1968, and if I wanted to get any credit for things, it was one of the first pieces that used the idea of environments and their sound characteristics. The idea was that you'd move various sized sound environments into other environments, that is, carry sounds from one place to another, thereby changing them.

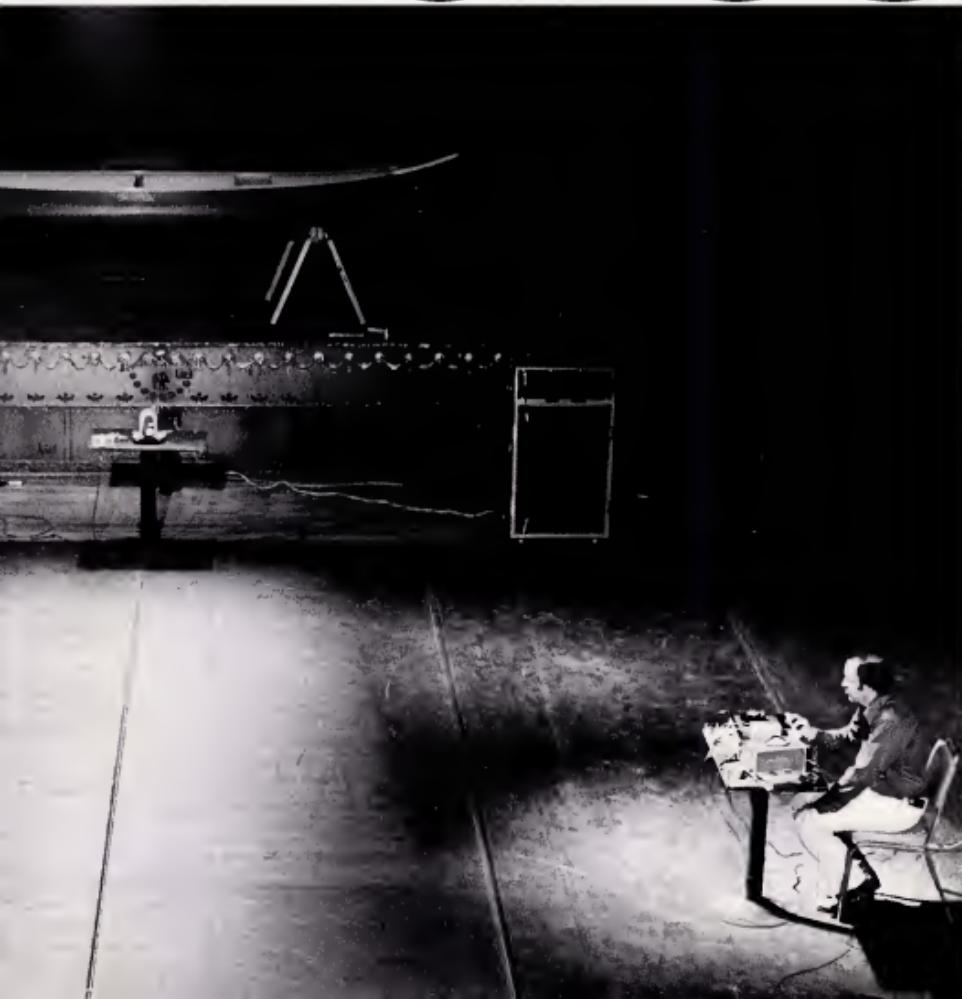
Do you see any connection with Duchamp in your use of commonplace objects in this piece?

ora



Lucier's pieces devote as much to the theatrical exploration of the spaces they're performed in as any more conventional considerations

nwaves



I do now, but I didn't then. I didn't really know his work then. But I have a student who is very interested in Duchamp, so I've started reading Octavio Paz's book, but I can't say that I was influenced by Duchamp when I did this. Maybe I shouldn't find out about him really. Perhaps it would stop me from doing things that I would do. When I chose these objects for this show, I think I did the right thing by not using much taste. Paz says that the imitators use what they think is taste when they choose objects and then their work becomes cute.

Was it difficult to choose object without using taste?

Well, it wasn't that I chose them without taste, it's just that the best ones were afterthoughts. I mean I just took some things that I already had. I was in Amsterdam a few months ago and thought of buying a fancy cigar box, but I couldn't bring myself to do it. It just didn't seem right. However, I did pick a German music stand box I had, but that was an afterthought. Yet, taking a look at it, it's one of the nicest things. Actually the piece isn't supposed to be focussed on interesting objects, it's supposed to be focussed on objects that can impart their sonic characteristics on those other sounds I decided I should have some plastic and metal and so forth and that's really more important than the imagery of the object.

Don't you think perhaps that the piece demonstrates the theatrical potential of non-music objects?

Sure. As much as I say that I'm interested in the acoustical aspect of it, I must admit that there's something wonderful about the big railway station in Köln coming out of the thimble. I mean, a thimble is about the smallest thing you could possibly use and still be able to get a sound out of it. So there's a practical aspect too. I used the funnel because "tunnel" rhymed with "tunel" and in my score I started to get rhymes when I was writing the list of things.

Have you ever been interested in working on tape and processing sounds? I don't process sound all that much, it doesn't really interest me. The *I om Sitting in a Room* piece does it but processes speech by putting it back into an acoustical space — I like acoustical spaces. I mean, if you use a band-pass filter, you'll have to decide where you're going to set the centre frequency and I have no ways of making decisions of that kind.

When talking to Cage, we listened your ideas to his in that you both draw attention to life (although Cage admits a multiplicity that you don't). You focus attention on a single natural phenomenon revealing an inner life of which we are generally unaware. Do you see this similarity?

Yes I may have gotten that idea from some of his works but I have taken it in a very different direction.

You also both present sound for itself rather than using it for some kind of metaphor.

Yes, I think so. The wonderful artist Robert Irwin keeps talking about reducing the metaphor to get at the presence that he wants. I have to do that all the time and it's hard. It's the process of composition that I have to go through — it's not as easy as you think. It just doesn't occur to me immedi-

ately what I have to do.

I read in your essay *The Tools of My Trade* that sometimes when you first conceive of a piece you begin with the principal idea followed by a temptation towards greater complexity but finally reduce it to its minimum. For example, wasn't there a temptation to use many wires in *Music On A Long Thin Wire*?

Yes. People often say, "Why don't you use two wires?" or they want one to interact with the other. That's a whole separate aesthetic.

How does it feel to be "in the hoods", so to speak, of the sounds? The works of most composers are in the hands of the performers. Have you ever had any bad "performances" or outright disasters where the phenomenon simply hasn't worked?

Oh I have lots of disasters. Then everybody looks at me like I'm the emperor or without any clothes. Sometimes I will do a piece that doesn't work all that well, but part of it does and I know it does. I have a piece called *Shapes Of The Sounds From The Board*. It's a piano piece. When you strike a note on that piano, you can hear it moving in space. Does it worry you that other people might not hear that?

Well yes. I mean, when you play a note on the piano you can hear, due to the phase — you know most piano tones are sounded by three strings and they're a little bit out of tune, so there are phase shifts going on and I can hear those shifts as movement of sounds in space. And if you play a different note, it has a different shape. I can hear that but very few people can. So if you play that piece, it escapes 99 percent of the people. They just don't think it's happening or if you say it's "moving", they think of movement in a poetic way. They don't think that you really mean the sound waves are moving.

Do you think it is important for musicians to draw more attention to the physicality of sound, as you are doing, rather than the sounds being a representation of something else?

Well, that's what I do. The performers, I don't know about them. All I know is that they're more aware of that now. I've made some pieces in the past three or four years for string players and pianists and they're very much aware of those things, because when they practise, they listen to them. Can you tell us something about your current projects?

Yes I've made some pieces for musical instruments — a trio for viola, cello and piano, a septet, a piece for a small orchestra, one for solo clarinet, a kettle-drum piece — and they're for players I know that have been asking me to with interference patterns and audible beats. I'm writing a triangle piece now for the percussionist Brian Johnson and the fact that Morton Feldman died ... I happened to glance at a page of the score of Feldman's recent piece for flute and orchestra and saw he was using six triangles (it might have been more or less) of various sizes. Now, I'm not one for writing pieces for someone who dies, that kind of thing, but I'd like to write a piece for solo triangle. I recently came upon a Béla Bartók phrase which is quite beautiful — you know, the Surrealists, they hated music — and he has a glossary of instruments of the orchestra, describing them in terrible ways, but he calls the triangle the "Silver Streetcar for the Orchestra", which I liked, and I'm tempted to use as the title.

Could you tell us something about your echo-location piece *Vespers*? Do you see it as musical theatre?

I guess so. Except I don't impose the theatre on the piece. I wouldn't do anything extraneous to make it theatre. I just performed *Vespers* in Berlin I had four wonderful dancers who were supposed to be able to do things in spaces with their body relationships and so forth, and I blindfolded them completely. That was wonderful but I didn't blindfold them for theatrical reasons. I blindfolded them so that they couldn't see. I wouldn't pretend to blindfold them, to make a theatrical statement. I either do it or I don't. I did it so that they had to use echo-location to move around. □

This slightly edited extract is from Smith and Walker Smith's *Interviews With American Composers* (published next year by Faber & Faber)

**"If you say it's 'moving',
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movement in a poetic
way. They don't
think that you really
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great lost recordings

In our regular feature on forgotten or neglected recordings, Barry Witherden recalls the flavour of 1968 in the shape of *Very Urgent* by The Chris McGregor Sextet.



(PHOTO: JULIUS WILSON)

1967 hit hard when visionaries Che and Trane were taken from us, but 1968 was the year the 60s really ended, when the hopes and dreams of a generation staggered and began to die, the year which saw Dr King gunned down and Dr Castro succumb to the despair of dogma. Unless you were dumb enough to see student "revolutions" as anything more than bog-standard youth rebellion prior to setting back on track into steady job and homelife, or the other time-honoured riches, jack-the-lad or jill-the-sort, perennial activist in academia, the media or some elitist masturbatory political splinter-group, 1968 gave no cause for optimism.

We clutched at straws, at personal ways of ignoring where the wind was blowing — the weekly gigs at the 100 Club, for example where I heard McGregor's six-piece in person for the first time, and a music that exemplified what I, naive teenager that I was, thought life should be like: vivid, exciting, open and adventurous. To cap it all, the foot that drove the bass-drum tread onmine on its way to the bar. This, with Moholo's amiable apology, gave me ten points in the Flame Game, and I never cleaned that shoe again. The title of the group's only LP summed up the feel of the times: *Very Urgent*. You'll hardly be shocked to learn that it was almost immediately deleted.

McGregor's band had begun to assemble at the 1962 Johannesburg Jazz Festival, when he linked up with Mongezi Feza, Nick Moyake, Johnny Mbizo Dyan and Louis Moholo, on the way to becoming the legendary Blue Notes — legendary and racially mixed. There were, you will have guessed, problems at home — so, during a visit to Europe in 1964, they decided to settle in Switzerland. A year later they moved to London and, with Ronnie Beer replacing Moyake on tenor, they became the sextet

which recorded in London in December 1967.

I used to catch the band as often as I could. Their gigs were bemusing, a little scary even, but always exhilarating, propelling us (and them) towards exhausting but joyful catharsis. Those who heard and saw them in person should count themselves lucky, because the likes of this will not come again. Recall, small and fragile-looking, Mongezi's body contorting and tottering, one leg winding round the other, while his trumpet would hover like a bee and sting like a hornet. McGregor, large, shambling, but with darting agile hands, would be bent over the keyboard, his sometimes demonic demanour of concentration subverted by an avuncular smile at some especially satisfying turn of events. Pukwana, forbidding in his intensity, would provoke his alto into skeins of severe lyricism or tough, exuberant convulsions. Beer, with the lowest profile but essential to the very fabric of the band would snitch his tenor into the complex weave. And Dyan, strong and serious, held everything together.

A live session for Radio Three taped some months later gave an even better idea, but *Very Urgent* captured the feel of the band as well as any studio date could. Made up of highlights from their standard repertoire — Pukwana's "Mane My Dear", the traditional "Don't Sit The Beehive", McGregor's "Travelling Somewhere", "Heart's Vibrations", "The Sounds Begin Again" and "White Lies" — it took in a major slice of the group's range, from the smouldering grace of tunes inspired by traditional hymns and songs, through acerbic ballads and impudently insistent riff-anchored workouts, to the turbulent adrenalin rushes of the free-jazz excursions McGregor's spiny piano and Dyan's hortatory bass rivet the tracks together, Moholo's surf booms and splashes, and Feza, Beer and Pukwana lock horns or else cut free, solo. There was certainly urgency, and hope, though hindsight also insinuates hints of desperation into the determined optimism of much of the music of this period.

Moyake, who returned to South Africa when the others moved to London, died in the mid-80s. Feza died in 1975 in circumstances both tragic and suspicious. Dyan, deeply affected by this, would frequently express his anger and frustration with the artistic barriers he and Feza met. Never free from ill-health — Dave Holland and the late Harry Miller often depped for him in the sextet — he died in 1986. McGregor and Pukwana died within a few weeks of one another in 1990. Beer was last heard of building boats in Ibiza.

The incomparable Moholo, though, threw a cymbal at an impudent heart attack in 1990 and was soon back on the stand with not the least sign of diminished power, flexibility or imagination. Check him out on *Spirits Rejoice* (named for one of his beautiful bands of the 70s) on Ogun 101, where he can be heard powering The Dedication Orchestra, which contains more superb players than you could shake a rhythm-stick at. *Very Urgent* (Polydor 181 137) is long out of print, but *Spirits Rejoice* is in its way an eminent alternative. Profits from the album go to the Spirits Rejoice Dedication Trust Fund, a fitting memorial for those Blue Notes now fallen silent. The Fund was established to found a bursary for a young African musician to come to London for study and experience, and its promoters (who include Moholo, Hazel Miller and Evan Parker) are also hoping to provide financial support for a music school in South Africa. □

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reel to reel

If the whole concept of raving has become somewhat hollow in the age of speed Techno and sulphate psychosis, it's still the chosen leisure time option for many. And now what was once an exclusive, tribal experience — limited only to those willing to venture out to muddy provincial fields, isolated industrial estates and draughty warehouses with poor acoustics — can be accessed by anyone with a VHS.

At least that's the theory behind the release of video compilations like Fantazia's *The Ultimate Rave Collection* (Creation Entertainments) and 3 Lux-3's *A Journey Through Ambience* (RTM Pinnacle). Slap in the cassette, hook it up to your amplifier, sit back and let the sounds and visuals wash over you until your mind lets go and transports you into the transitory world of the rave.

Of course it doesn't quite work like that. Some of these videos are simple records of events, while others are designed for the aftermath of a night out, to soothe and relax the punter coming down from a high. Some, like K Klass's *The Full Program* (Jettisoundz), cater for the retro tendency and present an idyllic, curiously innocent picture of the effect the music and the parties had on the first and second generation ravers. In fact, unless you've got a 100 inch TV screen and a 10K ng for a stereo, you're not going to reproduce the atmosphere of a rave in your front room. Rather these tapes give an implicit reading of where the scene is heading, where it's been and, at their best, offer a glimpse of a future where image and sound are no longer separate but totally intertwined.

That's the inspiration for 3 Lux-3's

In this month's **Reel To Reel,** **David Eimer plugs into the ambience of the rave video.**

latest, the third in a series of ambient meanderings through computer-generated graphics produced by Studio K7 in Berlin, it scores immediately by assigning a different video artist to each of the 12 tunes featured, thereby avoiding a uniform flow of visuals and allowing a more personal interpretation of the music.

As it moves from Voo's "Freezer AC1", a dreamy idle travelogue, through some of the best in German progressive House, to the finale and The Orb's brilliant, spaced-out "Towers Of Dub", we get a vision that's tailored specifically to each track. At its most effective you're duped into believing that it's the music generating the images; the gap between the two mediums closes to create an integrated whole. Zooming and spiralling across empty, muted landscapes endlessly disintegrating and reforming shapes and shifting colours, these are visuals completely removed from the narrative-based promo. Like the sound itself, they are self-contained and hypnotic; their very existence their rationale. Studio K7 have also wisely chosen some of the most innovative musicians around as collaborators: the ubiquitous Aphex Twin, the enigmatic Biosphere and other, lesser known Technoids operating out of Frankfurt and Cologne.

A complete contrast, *The Ultimate Rave Collection* gives us a depressing example of what raving has become. Touting themselves as the world's leading rave promoters, Fantazia specialise in setting up mega parties for thousands of eager orbital teenagers and this is nothing more than an advert for these events. Centred around the 1992 New Year rave in Wiltshire,

The Ultimate Rave Collection provides a picture of the sort of package expected from mainstream raves these days: flagrantly nudes, chewing gum dispensers and an endless diet of pop Techno. Interspersing the barrage of breakbeats are gurning ravers, declaring that this is the "best night I've ever had". Even the local plod get in on the act, saying how trouble-free the event is. Four years ago the police were trying to prevent such events taking place and it's an indication of how mainstream rave culture is that now they can be seen endorsing them. There's no doubt that Fantazia's organisational abilities are impressive but the video is summed up when they ask what people want in 1993 and the reply is "play it louder, play it faster".

If you want a look at what was going on in the days before Hardcore, ecstasy-induced deaths and sanitised pay parties, then *The Full Program* from K Klass is a mellow and pleasant reminder. Although they're now an anemic live band, playing standard garage-y House, back in 1990, when this was shot — in Ibiza, Lancashire and Scotland — K Klass were on the edge of the revolution created, unwittingly, by the Detroit DJs who discovered the squiddy, acid sound of the Roland 303 synthesizer. Optimistic and enjoyable, full of happy hippos waving their hands in the air, it's a long way from the clenched jaw and 150 BPM plus experience that characterises today's scene. □



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Maria Callas
By Jürgen Kesting
QUARTET (Hbk £25)

Voices: Singers & Critics
By JB Steane
DUCKWORTH (Hbk £25)

You may have your guitar heroes and your saxophone colossi but, when it comes to music that really works, I hear voices. What the voice can do defines the form of almost every music, none more so than opera, of course. The idiom may be culturally privileged, but its primary appeal is not that different from country music's, or blues's, or whatever it lies in the ability of the voice to delineate emotion, partly through words but essentially through timbre and colour and pitch.

Of course, opera has acquired all sorts of excess baggage, none more damaging than the caricature of the *prima donna*, overpaid, over-sensitive and usually overweight. At various times in her career Maria Callas was all of these, and she came to represent — still does, I think — the very qualities of excess that endear some to opera while repelling everyone else. Kesting's not dishonourable project in his long biography of the singer is to show that the image was false and became a means to baffle her considerable craft.

The problem is, this entails going over the same details that every Callas biography covers, picking arguments with the various biographers along the way. His bibliography lists 19 other Callas biographies, so that's a lot of arguments to make a point that a long article can do equally well. The odd reference to Theodor Adorno or Hans-Magnus Enzensberger is no doubt intended to add cultural

In this month's
Print Run, books
on Maria Callas,
critical voices, New
York punk and
record collecting



Callas addressed

weight to what is essentially a fan letter.

John Steane is no less of a fan, but you won't catch him quoting Adorno at you. He's essentially an old-style buff, collecting voices the way some people collect postage stamps. But he has the marvelous gift of being able to explain his obsession, even to mock it lightly. The first section of *Voices* divides and sub-divides vocal types — five types of soprano, for example: *leggiero*/soubrette, coloratura, lyric, lyrical-dramatic, heroic. Steane then probes the distinctions, assessing

how they've changed through history, in the opera house and in the recording studio. He follows that with voice-profiles of ten of his favourite singers, achieving as much in his ten pages on Callas as Kesting does in 350.

The last section is perhaps the most interesting. "Critics at the Opera" provides an anatomy of the preferences and prejudices of a handful of men (all men) whose job it was to review opera. They were all writing in the 1920s and 1930s, which says something about the direction Steane's

temperament faces, but he's wise enough to acknowledge how things change.

Apart from the preface, all the pieces have appeared in magazines before being collected for £25 we might feel something new could have been added. But Heylin gives a truly personal sense of what Keating calls the "measured immoderation" which is opera. After reading, I hear even more voices than before.

NICK KIMBERLEY

From The Velvets To The Voidoids (A Pre-Punk History For A Post-Punk World)

By Clinton Heylin
PENGUIN PBK £9.99

It is Rock's fate to be written up by earnest encyclopedists Clinton Heylin — Dylan biographer and typical US rocky train spotter — thinks in a series of skinny-te straight lines. He is, to paraphrase the book's subtitle, a John Tobler for a postpunk world — *FVVTV* is all root and no branch.

I'm sure that many of us, when we first heard something like the otherworld intensities of early Pere Ubu or Patti Smith's Horses (their negative core of fire and non-sense and transcendental noise) weren't in the least concerned with labyrinthine connections to the (Velvet) Underground or personnel changes or other retrospective contours: the sheer motion of the music suggested a world in which desires we hardly knew existed could find a sudden, bright and possessing articulation. The music of that time resounds, still, with a startling sense of both (self) possession and loss. But all the questions posed by Greil Marcus in *Lipstick Traces* — why does this scrappy music continue to mean so much to us? — are neglected here, as Heylin rearranges everything into an airtight CD-orderly story.

What the book hints at but never states (there are very few value judgements risked here) is that records that were being made in the pre-punk 70s (Stooges, New York Dolls, early Pere Ubu, etc.) make up a more powerful and integral legacy than much that was unleashed under the more

formulaic ideology of Punk or New Wave, that everything which led up to the 'Revolution' was more interesting than the putsch itself, that all the untrammeled energies were usurped by — by what? Heylin passes.

Rather he deals with a terrain of meetable demands of rehearsal space, record contracts, changing line-ups, etc. The virtue of the book's Q & A format is that it (finally) gives the musicians their say, but this isn't always such a hot idea. It gives the immediate impression of an overwhelming rush of info, but when it's over, you're left scratching your head, not much wiser. Heylin doesn't address any of the specifics which might be interesting — the form and failures of New York cultural history, or the difference between UK and US punk (US was all about ART, whereas UK was often about SOCIAL DEMAND — scrawled, inarticulate, staged, maybe, but present all the same).

Get Heylin off the interview track and he's not a writer who is interesting to read; he doesn't respond to his material — he just lays it out like a factsheet — and he has a forehead-creasing way with cliché and hyperbole ("it must have been something they were putting in New York's ink!" That exclamation mark!). It is rather unfortunate that something which redefined the form and limits of teenage language should end up being re-written in such a hackneyed and limiting way.

An assertion about 80s "thrash metal" shows just what bad critics fact-checkers can make: "these musical movements have been essentially peripheral to 'pop' music, hidden from the mainstream." Go tell that to Guns n'Roses, Nirvana, Jane's Addiction, etc. Heylin (in his Velvets fixated eye) can't see that in the end — in figures like Perry Farrell, Henry Rollins, et al — it was LA that kept to the punk aesthetics produced more action, more longevity, because, paradoxically, LA kids had more of a stalemate culture to rebel against than the too-often self-satisfied bohos of New York. *FVVTV* is a useful wedge of raw historical data, but if only...

IAN PENMAN

Record Collector Rare Record Price Guide

Ed by Peter Doggett

DIAMOND PUBLISHING (PBK £14.99)

Strange though it may seem, not everyone now chooses the five-inch high-tech CD as their favourite sound carrier. Some, and their numbers are increasing, actually prefer those quaint old LPs, EPs and 45s with their surface noises and propensity to jump during a favourite part of the sax solo. Some such collectors do not even listen to their prized possessions: one Croydon vinyl veteran, close to completing his treasury of gold label London-American singles, told me, "I never listen to them. I collect them as objects. I heard more than enough music when I was younger." It is to such diehards and the more casual collector that this book will appeal.

Introduced and set out in the limp style which is one of its parent magazine's selling points, the book lists over 60,000 record releases from the birth of the 45s to the present day, as long as their value in mint condition is over £4 for a single, £7 for an EP or \$10 for an album.

A few of these wee shiny jobs do creep in, but only if they're worth £15 or more. The definition of worth being how much someone will pay for something at a given moment. The values can never be 100 per cent accurate — that Miles Davis *Esquire* LP may fetch \$25 in London but less in Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

Nor can the listings hope to be complete: some releases are so obscure that even *Record Collector*'s team of experts haven't heard of them. Worse than omissions, though, are conflicting duplicates: one ska LP is listed twice in the "Various Artists" pages, with a \$30 difference in its quoted value. But on the whole this hefty volume is a treasure trove of information, as much for its revelation of just what was released during the golden age of vinyl (can Earl Bostic really have had 18 singles issued in Britain?) as for its assessment of how much those 18 singles would set you back if you could find them (£163).
MIKE ATHERTON



sound check

WIRE WINNER: know the score

Ry Cooder

Trespass Original Soundtrack
Sire 93262-45220 CD

If Mickey Hart's *Apocalypse Now* Sessions stalked the traumatic route up river, then *Trespass* tails the nightmare ride downtown. Its fugitive noises and nocturnal emissions carry the city's cultural infections. Balinese and Korean rhythms mix it with Soñé As Milk riffing. 4/4 patterns puncture jazz improvisations and, on "You Think It's On Now", the resurrected Miles leads a Krishna procession. This is environmental music from a concrete jungle, which thankfully bypasses the supergroup blandness which suffocated Ry Cooder's previous Little Village folly.

He trademark guitar slides shimmer across sparse surface areas, but here he has located a new brutality. High powered amplification enables him to dramatize malevolent growls and violent scrapes for the turbulent exchanges with long term collaborator/percussionist Jim Keltner. The third member of the trio is Jon Hassell, who has surprisingly pawned off his usual digital gulf stream sweep in favour of a dry, parched tone. "Heron" exemplifies the trio's scrap fusion. Sacrificing star roles to construct a fragmentary collage, it oddly resembles Ahmet's bewitching sound flux, as oblique sounds collide to create accidental incident. Previously, Cooder's approximation of Blind Willie Johnson's style throughout Paris, Texas, and Hassell's nomadic ethnic sampling attracted contentious accusations of musical colonialism. Miraculously *Trespass* steers clear



Alfred
Schnittke

of such singular piratical flaunting as it delivers its own idiosyncratic mutant city noise. Pasting the cheesy C&W singalong "Party Lights" on as the finale, however, does seem as perfidious a gesture as closing Bernard Herrmann's *Psycho* score with Nigel Kennedy covering a Jimi Hendrix piece.

K. MARTIN

WIRE WINNER: string fellow

Philip Glass/Alfred Schnittke
Violin Concerto/Concerto Grosso
No. 5

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 437 091 CD

If latter-day composers ever looked for a patron saint upon the concert platform, then they would find him in the diminutive figure of violinist Gidon Kremer. Several

years ago, Kremer recorded some extraordinarily lucid performances of Arvo Part on ECM. More recently, he has championed Luigi Nono, Ned Rorem and his Russian compatriot, Sofia Gubaidulina. This CD, the latest in DG's Kremer series, which pairs him with the Vienna Philharmonic under Christoph Von Dohnanyi, offers first recordings for two new works. Although neither Glass nor Schnittke need any introduction, their reputations can only be enhanced by the spirit with which Kremer speaks for them.

In one sense, introductions to Glass's first Violin Concerto (written for Paul Zukofsky in 1987) are superfluous. As the opening arpeggios slide into martial drums and brass, one is assailed with an unmistakable sense of déjà-vu —

only explained if one plays the concerto back-to-back with Glass's soundtrack for *Mishima*. The string quartets that Glass wrote for the Kronos Quartet on *Mishima* contained some beautiful, searing music, and this concerto is no different. Moreover, the thematic similarities are not so surprising. *Mishima* and the later concerto are separated by only two years and — if Akhnaten (where opera excerpts were adapted for dance pieces) is any measure to that — Glass's works do share a certain temporal identity. Moreover, the concerto goes places that *Mishima* only hinted at. Across its conventional three-movement structure, the orchestra sets up a relentless, brooding rhythm upon which floats the violin's solo, virtuous voice. It is strongly affective and, sliding towards silence on a single string, also unashamedly romantic.

Schnittke's declared polystylicism similarly has room for romantic elements. His previous grosso concertos filtered Vivaldi and Bach through a modernist lens and conveyed a sense of musical displacement. His fifth — this is a live recording of the work's premiere in New York in May 1991 — takes as its base the four seasons, it swarms with an elemental, roaring noise that owes something to Stravinsky and later composers, whose tone-clusters have left hovering, ambivalent sounds. Balanced above this dynamo, Kremer plays with a white-hot intensity. That the listener is left breathless by the time Kremer reaches the dignified tone that marks Schnittke's finish says much for the composer's achievement.

LOUISE GRAY

In Soundcheck:

David Bowie, Tim Berne, Jason Rebello, Jon Hassell, Heinz Holliger, Sugar, Stephen Micus and Peter Hammill

In Outline:

Mike Atherton gets the blues, and Ian Penman gives thought to John Coltrane

In Brief:

Kodwo Eshun goes club-footed, Ben Watson gets jazz-headed

WIRE WINNER: jazzrap-not-jazzrap

Greg Osby

30 Lifestyles

EPM BLUE NOTE CDP7986352

30 Lifestyles has already been praised as the finest jazz-rap album to date. This is a mistake. It's a strong album, just not a jazz-rap album and here's why. Jazz-rap as a hyphenate appears to be an equal partnership, but it's really a hierarchy in which the latter violently subordinates the former. Call it Hip-Hop's fear of jazz. Because it builds up from loops, rap can't cope with jazz's long lines, the way the alto sax, for instance, wones at a note. So jazz-rap has to restrict jazz to a canon of 70s fusion which it can use. (No one has yet "used" Ayler or Braxton in Hip-Hop — because it's impossible.) Jazz-rap uses fusion to defend itself against the rest of jazz — because Hip-Hop is a very strict and classical form. All the main producers know what can and can't be done with it (that's why none of them will use the term).

Obviously jazz-rap functions as an analogical Holy Grail. If the two — jazz and rap — can be fused into harmony, then maybe life wouldn't be so bad after all. But by now it might be more exciting to hear a record which forcefully holds the two musics apart, whilst keeping them in the same zone. Instead of fusion, separation — and in the gap resonances of unfamiliarity, strangeness, charm, harsh tension. This is that record — and Greg Osby plays off this new interzone of finely grained differences. You need a vocabulary of calibration and adjustment to add to the more seductive language of charisma and ravines to get with his programme

Further consumer info: labels not named in this column should be obtainable at good specialist stores — or through such sterling distributors as New Note, Harmonia Mundi, Cadillac, Impetus, These ...

Symposium: Elliot Levin, 110 Derwent Ave, East Barnet, Herts EN4 8LZ

On the excellent opening track, "Gutterman", Osby's sat is a river. It runs on while 100X, a new rap crew from Philly, tell episodes from the every day situations of a tramp. The two channels, intimate but separate, duel each other, never once uniting. On "Hardcopy", which features Geri Allen on piano, Osby invites Ali Shaheed Muhammad from A Tribe Called Quest to produce with Cassandra Wilson scatting in and out of the mesh, the effect is intricate and direct at the same time. It's a very strong album. It will be liked for the wrong reasons.

KODWO ESHUN

WIRE WINNER: brit award

Iain Hamilton

Piano Works/Symphony Quartet No. 3

SYMPHONY 1121 CD

With Fricker and Searle, Hamilton was the first British composer to establish a post-World War II reputation. Their pieces were much performed in the 1950s, but Hamilton (like Fricker) went to America to teach, and he remained there for 20 years. His music was gradually forgotten here but he of course went on composing, even prolifically. Indeed, over the decades he has pursued a highly individual line of development embracing a wide range of expression and an impressive variety of technical means, all this signifying a steady inner growth. Exotic elements started to appear following visits to the West Indies in the 1960s, and more recently extra-musical sources of inspiration were added, these at first literary. Thus Voyage (1970) for french horn and small orchestra cites lines from Rimbaud and Baudelaire in

the score.

Given Hamilton's present neglect, this release is more than welcome, and it juxtaposes Quartet No. 3 (1984) with two solo piano compositions, Polynodes (1972) and Le Jardin De Monet (1986). Played by the Delme Quartet, the former has something of his earlier music's fierceness of expression and includes an especially beautiful slow movement. Though argued throughout with characteristic tautness, it is more romantic in attitude than the two keyboard cycles, both performed by Katharina Woipe, to whom Polynodes is dedicated.

The seven movements of Polynodes and the nine of Le Jardin De Monet result from extra-musical promptings, literary in the first case, mainly visual in the second, though it should be emphasised that Hamilton's music is not programmatic. In the former, single lines from poems by Rimbaud set off in the composer's mind trains of purely musical thought. Le Jardin De Monet arose from the delights of a visit to Monet's garden at Giverny in Normandy, but this chanced to be on 1 July 1986, the 70th anniversary of the start of the battle of the Somme, and hence the fugitive evocations of distant bugle calls in the pared down final nocturne.

As to musical language, Polynodes is the more austere and percussive, Le Jardin more rarefied, with a little, catlike grace, though with moments of abruptness too. Polynodes uses some of the keyboards' (and pedals') resources to strikingly personal ends while Hamilton's writing in Le Jardin is pianistic in a more traditional sense, though its summer-morning



freshness also shows how inexhaustible the instrument is. Each piece makes its point with concise immediacy, the discourse tight-packed with ideas, and despite its resolute unity, the music is full of surprises.

Although listeners will be reminded of the sensuousness of Debussy and Ravel, Hamilton's appeal is in another, cooler, direction. The final point made by all three performances is that there is no good reason for Hamilton's music not being heard far more often.

MAT HARRISON

soundcheck

Adorable

Against Perfection

CREATION CRECD 138 CD

Overhearing a conversation the other day, I heard one twenty-something remark to another, "Hey, rock's dead". To which the friend replied, "No it isn't. It was dead, but now it's alive!" If this is true, as the hype has been suggesting lately, Adorable are safe. They rock resplendent with thrashing guitars that disentangle themselves sporadically to achieve moments of cool perspicacity. The name is all waifish and ethereal, conjuring up images of creation stables Ride and Slowdive (or, worse, fluffy bubblegum pop). Like a throwback to 80s rock, falling somewhere between The Chameleons and Echo And The Bunnymen, Adorable make ground in rejuvenating the genre. But they're not grunge — they're less faddist than Check out "Homeboy" for its snarling magnificence and "Glorious" for its assured swagger. There's still some beauty to be found from fury and Adorable know something the rest of the pack don't.

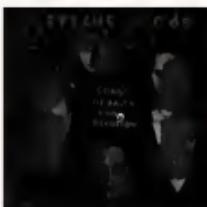
SAM BATRA

Aon

One

BIG LIFE BLR 22 CR/MGLP

It was only a matter of time before the current batch of sampler-inferior combos would profess a liking for the kind of arcane



forbidden fruit that had long been frowned upon by the critical cognoscenti. Take The Orb for example, recently cutting their love of Floyd's Dark Side Of The Moon and being instrumental in reviving Steve Hillage's 'creativity' and 'credibility' via their System 7 project. With this re-evaluation of musical mores, what price a new age folk revival?

Aon shorten the odds, skilfully balancing ancient and modern, their folky melodies rubbing shoulders with acoustics, synthetics and cool programmed rhythms. Crucially, their sound is no post-modern mishmash nor merely a high-tech update of Steeleye Span Youth's production involvement was secured through a demo of "Quiet Joys". The late Sandy Denny put her distinctive stamp on this song way back, but Annie Burton's supple, haunting vocals — over a loping groove, acoustic guitars and sequig synths — lose out little by comparison. "Lost And Found" succeeds in a more abstract way with reverse echo vocal, harp and sequencers. Whatever would Cecil Sharp have said?

Connoisseurs of the tales of murder and sexual intrigue that run through folk songs prepare for disappointment — Aon's ruddy-cheeked positivism manifests itself in lines like "the dancing girl with mandolin and smile". Aon heads blandwards at times, but it would take a hard heart not to be buoyed up in its seductive flow.

DAVE 'HEY NONNY NO' MORRISON

Tim Berne

Diminutive Mysteries (Mostly Hemphill)

JNT 514 003 CD

An album of music based on compositions by former World Saxophone Quartet member Julius Hemphill. Whatever Hemphill's growing renown as a composer, the written element here is only half the story, as superb improvisations by Tim Berne and a band of fellow NY vanguard luminaries are integral to the music's strength. Berne's work on alto and baritone in combination with Hank Roberts' cello playing recalls Dolphy and Carter at times, an impression which some of the writing

encourages, not least the longest (and only non-Hemphill) track, the 20 minute Berne composition "The Maze". However, the music's heart is in a later era, its strongest impulse deriving from the sounds and textures of free jazz, which it combines with the underlying composed structures that run throughout all the pieces. The melodies and arrangements are subtle and melancholic, but the real pleasure of the work is in the vibrancy and acumen the ensemble bring to the improvisations. David Sanborn, who shares a predilection for crying high-register work with Berne (and Hemphill), is in unringing mood. His sharp support of Berne's alto runs makes affecting listening. Joey Baron is versatile and inventive as ever and the relatively unknown guitarist Marc Ducret adds an understated Finsell-like commentary to the proceedings.

WILL MONTGOMERY

David Bowie

Black Tie White Noise

SAVAGE/BMG 74321 13697 2

Depeche Mode

Songs Of Faith & Devotion

HUTE CD STUFF 106

Philip Glass

"Low" Symphony

PONTE/PHILIPS CLASSICS 438 150-2

I'm inclined to like Philip Glass. If he's an opportunist, he isn't given to pompous attention-deflecting rhetoric about it. He acknowledges debts that others would find disabling, this is one, not to 'God' in the manner of Taverner or Part, but to David Bowie and Brian Eno.

But he'd have to admit debts to Betty Boo before I was tempted to pass the "Low" symphony off as important music. Compared to the second side of Bowie's Low, which it takes its themes from, Glass's symphony is sluggish and texturally barren. Eccentric harmonic shifts in the original are too often defanged, and even the composer's characteristic rhythmic pelmelt is rendered druggy, especially after the original's groundbreaking gamelan weightlessness.

Is this fair? After all, Bowie and Eno certainly owed the New York

Secret: through New Note

Splash!: through Impetus

Eva: Les Disques Du Soleil et de L'Aérol, BP 236, 54004 Nancy Cedex, France

soft-minimalists a debt too, and this is only a generous payment in kind, tip-the-hat time — not an exercise in replication — from an artist at the peak of his profession to another mired in tricky negotiation with the hungry ghosts of his vanished prime. The fact remains nothing in this symphony gets to the heart of what the original achieved — mere thematic development less respectful in music-history's eyes, than the gesture of thanks is in human terms.

The mucus-thin squeal of Bowie's sax, kicking off his comeback release *Black Tie White Noise*, is some reminder why The amorphous sax-squawk against choir of audibly synthetic angels, debuted on *Low*, made for a soundworld both lush and clammy, an emotional innervspace all the more evocative for being distracted, undecided, unnameable — it didn't register within so much as a little way over there, a screen of sound hiding a hollow core.

Bowie was one of the first to show that Artistic Persona was one more thing you could manipulate, no longer needed anchoring in your own life story. With *Low*, he pulled off an unrepeatable trick (and the time he was the first) he voided the focus point, the emotional centre, turned the central actor into a disposable prop, and then disposed of him, withdrawing personality, presence and voice from the music. Of course, this does just leave tunes and arrangements — but in a forecultural context of loss. You can take them and run with them elsewhere, but you can't — in the blurry real-time of an orchestra — recreate that vital, dramatic lack.

And everyone in pop was affected. Depeche Mode, some of his most lasting children, have made more than a decade's use of the freedom *Low*-music allows them — rooted in ambience and texture rather than voice and gesture (in synthesiser sensu around rather than guitars and vestigial recorded "live-ness"). The problem now comes when they turn back to their own resources, rather than the infinitely rechargeable landscapes makeovers of studio-technology

Endless excellent backdrop sound-effects notwithstanding (like the fine car-skid torn-metal shriek that opens the first song), the Depeche deal is now guitars, moody pictures of panos in big rooms, over-emoted U2-ish songs of hope and faith. With the exception of the headlong, robe-threatening "Rush", it's a record made by folks feeling their way back towards unalienated personal expression after they'd suddenly stopped believing in its non-existence.

Which is not that unusual a career-dynamic, however — depressing. Fact is, Bowie — who proved with *Low* that the trappings of adult maturity (as manifested in honest feel performance) aren't necessarily that radical, or even that interesting — has been trying, disastrously unsuccessfully, to disprove it ever since. But this moment, when he moved furthest, most triumphantly and most influentially away from the narrow "truths" of personal reportage, haunts him as seriously as it throws him. If *BTWN* is made with the whole of his past desperately in mind — hence involvement from trusty former sidekicks like Mick Ronson, Mike Garson and Nile Rodgers — and if it mostly busily quotes many of these backpages, the LP as a whole more often echoes a record which directly echoed *Low*. The Walker Brothers' *Nite Flights* (vital clue: the fingerprint-perfect cover of Scott Walker's "Nite Flights") This 1978 release, from a smart group trapped in teeny-pop fame (the BeeGees with politics degrees), who perhaps believed that Bowie's twilightspace disco-muzak opened their path back into public and critical favour, was a sombre jetset-funk descent into loneliness and wealth-cushioned terror.

Bowie may even sing like Walker's idiot cousin these days, in a garrulous, tortured croon, but he doesn't follow through. He allows Nile Rodgers to provide almost every song with a wearying crunchbeat rhythm. As with *Mode* the incidental sound is often strikingly attractive, clever even when it's openly quoting old records — this is an useful salespoint if you're in a forgiving

mood). Lesley Bowie's and Mike "piano-splitter" Garson's contributions should be filed at the less startling end of such touches, though the foreground production bodywork to the songs they play on is cluttered and smothersome. Bowie, L., has been quoted — even if he was just being polite about his surnaminate boss-for-the-day — as saying Bowie, D., has a save-all his own. In fact it's true, and it's one of the most heartening features if only he didn't feel the need to sing ...

I don't think he's got a clue, but then he never really did. Whatever it was possessed him to make *Low* — or to give a song a title like "Art Decade" — hasn't surfaced in all the will-to-confess stuff since. It's obviously not a feature of the "real" him. And I guess he's just too grown-up, and so are (what's left) of his listeners, to go hunting for new and brilliantly bogus selves. Pity. Adult music could do with more art and less honesty.

MARK SINKER

Don Cherry

Home Boy

SECRET RECORDS 552108 CD

Don Cherry is a restless soul. He's forever delving into different musics and collaborating with different musicians, wandering through pan-ethnic cultures like a modern day musical nomad. Which is why you shouldn't be surprised by *Home Boy*.

Recorded in 1985, it's essentially a funk/rock disc, though under Cherry's direction it's typically loose knit and unaggressive. He sings and raps over "straight" tunes and he's surprisingly soulful, no mottled-toned crooner but what he lacks in technique and tuning he makes up for with great lyrics and verbal meanderings like "Rapper Recipe", a rap about the ingredients for potato salad, or thoughts about an acquaintance in "Butterfly Friend". It's a relatively straight line-up too — piano, bass, drums, and percussion — unlike his more recent Multi-Kulti instrumentation and brings to the fore his pocket trumpet playing. Elsewhere he often plays little more than manicical bursts but here he stretches out and improvises with

all the melodicism of a trumpet (as opposed to pocket) player. A wholly charming album.

Laura Connell

Pascal Comelade

Haukus De Pianos

EVA WWCK2033 CD

The unlikely candidates for growing cultdom, the continental passion for French pianist Pascal Comelade unites industrial core admirers as far afield as Barcelona and Moscow, while the Japanese receive him as the missing link between Erik Satie and Jonathan Richman. Made in and for Japan, the aptly titled and instrumental *Haukus De Pianos* is cute enough to expand his Oriental following. Indeed, it's so cute you'll hate yourself for being suckered by its eclectic mix of movie themes, covers and the player's own tangos. In Comelade-ing Rota, Momocane, Mingus, Robert Wyatt, Enzo, Faust's "Sad Skinhead", Richman, MC5, Suicide and more, he isolates the energies of chosen pieces in single, brushstroke tunes, each brilliantly if briefly illuminated before fast-fading into the next. The theme to Fellini's *Amarcord* clues the Comelade method as the recreation of a lost domain, of dry, happy distorted memories of childhood. Meanwhile, the player's own tangos work trigger the desire to leave Oz behind for header off-limits pleasures, a desire more fulfilled, perhaps, on his earlier records, like *Razzazzan*, *The Blues and 33 Bars*, where toy combos splat dissonances whenever the music threatens pretences. But in merging kindergarten, cocktail and concert piano styles, *Haukus De Pianos* is a mostly enchanting replacement for Satie's threadbare furniture music teases.

BIBA KOFF

Carlo Actis Dato Quartet

Bagdad Boogie

SPLASCH! CDH 380 CD

Paolo Fresu Quintet

Balafats

SPLASCH! CDH 366 CD

Bagdad Boogie is something of a world tour of musical exotica with

none too accurate pastiches of various world music styles — although the authenticity of the music produced is not really the point. Thus we visit Senegal, Mali, Morocco (for a track entitled "Agadir Reggae" which is not reggae at all) and to round the whole affair off we are subjected to the dubious vocal talents of the group. Basically the quartet is a baritone saxophone/com pah-pah set up with occasional wildnesses but surprising self control. I was reminded of Hal Russell's NRG Ensemble on some of the tracks, especially when extended vamps or riff based structures are used. Above all the quartet works as a group with plenty of ensemble work and a welcome sense of mischief!

Alas, the same cannot be said for trumpeter Radio Fresu's latest excursion into the 1950s. Fresu, using harmon mute throughout, sounds too much like Miles Davis for comfort and the quartet attempts a pointless version of "Fall" from *Nefertiti*, which differs little from the original. Tinoh Tracanna's tenor sound is disappointingly small at times but generally trumpet and saxophone do work well together in a selection of well-known standards with the least well-known, Tom Harrell's "Sal Away" coming off best.

STEPHEN GRAHAM

Diaolito: Murmurs & Furt

Hospital Of The Soul

VINTAGE RECORDINGS VHTC 17 PIC

Diaolito: Murmurs & Furt is a collaboration between Adam Bohman, who amplifies small sounds in a manner which updates and expands John Cage's *Cartridge Music* (he's also a member of Morphogenesis and Conspiracy), and visual artist working with sound, Richard Crow Furt are the sampling and processing duo of Richard Barnett (a leading composer of the new complexity school in his other life) and Paul Obermayer. This tape, recorded on St Valentine's Day at the London Film-makers Co-op, documents the first installment of their ongoing multi-media collaboration. Adam Bohman tends to get a bit lost in the mix and the whole works best when stark

emphases in dynamics are allowed to occur when Bohman's rich sound world is set against Furt's timbally more flat (all that processing and reprocessing) but swifter and denser found-sound manipulation. At one stage a strong emotional framework is established by a choral looper over which Bohman's prepared strings speak like tortured vocal chords — a soul ripped bare. At another his squeaking violin is joined by the whirring of fans starting and stopping and even Bon Tempe keyboard chords, the heavy twang of its broken reverb string prominent before being smashed onto the concrete floor. These are moments when the pairing really works. Elsewhere, a little more attention to on-going dynamics and overall shape please.

PHIL ENGLAND

Dodge City Productions

Steppin' Up And Out

ISLAND RR SR7 CD/CLP

Various Artists

Rebirth Of Cool III

ISLAND RR S90 CD/CLP

D'Note

Babel

ORODO OOR012 CD/LP

Although the mass popularity of rare groove has come and gone, its effects on the major clubland players are far from over. In reworking the funk archives, it's no exaggeration to say they discovered an identity and purpose through it, which would stay with them their whole lives. The Young Disciples, The Heavies, Dodge City Productions — these young gold diggers were possessed by the Holy Grooves they rescued. Each reinvented themselves as heirs to a world they found shattered and buried. Their albums bear the marks of those years. They are Humanists With Attitude, determined to never let the funk fail again.

Dodge City Productions are the last of this generation. Their debut album, a seamless weave of soul, funk, latin and regga, is determined to touch all bases. It has a funky equality to it, a measured tone. DCP promote a sonic democracy.

They mistrust excess. They place their faith in a street metaphysics best summed up by their last track "Music Is Music". As with the Jungle Brothers' "Black Is Black", tautology draws a tight circle around identity. It's a model for the community they come from and would like to see in the face of all the uncertainty and despair they know is out there.

Rebirth III is a major label response to the mid-'80s compilations DCP helped put together. Numbers I and II touted jazz-rap as the apex of High Black Expression (Stetsasonic, Gang Starr and Brand Nubian justified this claim). But that high confidence has receded — leaving the melancholy of MC Solar and the fractured efforts of the Freestyle Fellowship in its wake. That removes what are essentially rhythm tracks by the Brecker Brothers and Greg Osby take pride of place here, suggests the mood is diminished, minor rather than major.

D'Note owing nothing to the grail of the groove. The raps on their debut, such as "Now Is The Time", signal the emergency time-frame of all militant Hip-Hop. But pulling against this are the feminine sighs, murmurs and surges of lush production values. D'Note's heart is in its instruments, its intros. Orchestral, rippled, clapped — the mystery thriller tune beginning of "D'votion", trumpet flourish of "Scheme Of Things" and the double speed piano glossando of "Rain", turns inward to indulge itself. While D'Note's flamboyance immerses you in a luxurious ravine, DCP's positive-image seriousness palls. They resemble Jurgen Habermas — all communicative ethics and no wandering out of the classroom. D'Note are Walter Benjamin — all allegory (*Babel*) and fine detail. And Rebirth? Rebirth is a footnote.

KOOWO ESHUN

Einstürzende Neubauten

Malediction

MUTE RETON 206 CO

Cop Shoot Cop

Ask Questions Later

RIG CAT ARB45 CD

Out of New York, Cop Shoot Cop's self-promoting 'smash retro'

manifesto, issued on their 1990 debut *Consumer revolt*, was always doomed to fail and backfire. Once critics had homed in on the group's own influences — Neubauten, Birthday Party, Big Black, Throbbing Gristle — CSC were as wide open to the charge of hypocrisy as the 60s fetishists singlehandedly. Tod A so disliked *With Ask Questions Later*, he's shifted the group's emphasis so that they now sound like they'd rather rip Einstürzende Neubauten off for their songs, not the sounds No longer "industrial" in any meaningful sense of the word, CSC now recall a youngish Nick Cave, if he'd chosen to sing about the city rather than the Deep South. irony, too, has wormed its way into the lyrics, shading off the subject matter — everyday life in New York, bodies on the subway tracks, crumbling flats — in a truly macabre, drunken fashion. And a line like "it's okay to kill in the name of democracy", howled out with perfect scorn on "Surprise, Surprise" confirms the transformation from caterwauling brats to caustic commentary.

Einstürzende Neubauten, like their American pupils, are a band in love with the bass, and it's the hallmark of both these records that they manage to weave something so satisfying — you hesitate to say well-written, but that's the crux of the matter — out of just the elements of voice and bass. *Malediction*, the mini-album follow up to February's excellent *Tabula Rasa*, is built for the most part around three pan-linguistic versions of "Blume" from that album, in English, French and Japanese to offset and ameliorate Blixa Bargeld's unique German whisper of a voice. But it's the remaining three tracks, especially the weirdly rhythmic "3 Thoughts", composed for dance group La La Human Steps, that really shine and make this an obligatory purchase. If Neubauten and Cop Shoot Cop are no longer on the cutting edge of avant-garde, their respective brands of post-industrial belligrady can still sound thoroughly cutting in other ways.

JAKUBOWSKI

Jon Gibson
In Good Company
POINT 434 873 CD

If there's a word in the musical vocab whose definition has grown more vague as the years pass by, it's minimalism. As the genre's composers constantly redefine themselves, it's interesting to listen to what the music's performers have to say. Jon Gibson's first commercially available album goes back to basics - *In Good Company* features unrecorded pieces from Reich, Glass and Riley. There's a rather haunting sax version of a piece from Adams's *Nixon*. LaMonte Young pops up on piano. This is excited company.

Gibson is well-placed to give minimalism its own exploratory album. A woodwind player at the heart of Glass's ensemble for the last 25 years or so, Gibson shared for many years close relationships with Reich, Riley, et al. *Company* is something of a historical treasure box. Reich's *Reed Phase* - written for Gibson in 67 - is prototype to much subsequent work; likewise Glass's *Grotes* (1968). Severe and stimulating, both pieces still speak loudly of the excitement of new ideas. As does, albeit in a different way, Terry Jennings's *Dorian Blues* (1962), which is an early experiment between forms. Gibson includes three self-compositions. They are economical pieces - a Satesque waltz, a solo sax piece that mimics a bagpipe drone, and *Extensions II*, which, with its echoes tabla and watery samples, sounds strangely luxuriant.

This is a modestly named album. Gibson's company is beyond good. Similarly, his role in the proceedings is greater than that of performer alone. Anyone with a degree of proficiency can make an album of minimalist covers, performers whose own histories are more intimately entwined with their music's composers are of an altogether rarer stock.

LOUISE GRAY

The Goats
Tricks Of The Shade
COLUMBIA COL 472680 CD/MCPLP

If further proof were needed that HipHop really is an alternative news

Vintage: 109 Corby Street,
London N4 3BX

Vinyl Solution: through Pinnacle

Kold Sweat: through Greyhound

network, a CNN for the disenfranchised, then *Tricks Of The Shade*, the debut album from Philadelphia rappers The Goats provides it. Clicking through the inconsistencies, hypocrisy and injustices of corporate America, tracks like "Nonega's Coke Stand", "TV Cops" and "Columbus's Boat Ride" reveal a stripped down polemic behind the sardonic and impassioned delivery of frontmen Swazzyk and Madz. Nothing new there, you might think, but what makes this special is that the tunes are framed and cut up by the misadventures of Chicken Little and Hangerhead, a pair of nafs searching for their Uncle Scam among the debris of an American inner city. As they blunder through a maelstrom of racist policemen, inadequate schools and uncivilized weapons, their sad but hilarious commentary acts as a Greek chorus, reinforcing and expanding on the record's themes.

Producer Joe "The Butcher" Nicolo, best known for his work with Cypress Hill, displays a light touch, allowing the mix of acoustic guitars, fairground organs, straight-up jazz and crazed opera to snuggle up against the unrelenting lyrical assault on conservative American values. Knowing and ambitious and done with a style and wit beyond most of their contemporaries.

DAVID EIPER

Gunshot
Patriot Games
VINYL SOLUTION STEAM 43 CD/LP

Katch 22
Dark Tales From Two Cities
KOLD SWEAT K54 CD/LP

The inverted racism which perceives US HipHop as being more credible or, more significantly, profitably than its UK counterpart, is an ironic truism not lost on the British rap scene. Bronx-brained record labels, DJs and journalists have unwittingly conspired, through ignorance, to banish emergent UK acts to the underground. — the major money moguls chewed up and spat out the dynamic Silver Bullet and alienated the assured prow of Black Radical Mk. 2, preferring to

licence exotic West Coast crews, while recent releases by Camerman and Demon Boyz were met by underwhelming media coverage.

"Patriot Games" as title track and diatribe is a ruff-edged reprisal which manically addresses the import imbalance — with Alkaline's fervent, tuff delivery eating up the speeding backbeats. Gunshot's Regga Rap attack is the most advanced sonic assault yet, unleashed by a UK outfit (respect due — DJ White Chid Re) Their high velocity rhyming fast forwards to form a wordy blur, which lacks PE's authoritative public info service, but matches their musical catharsis through pure adrenaline release. Raised on a diet of crime thrillers and spy movies, their violent adaptations are a triumph of metaphor over machismo, a stereo soundtrack scoring the problems faced in Britain's inner cities.

Katch 22 may not share Gunshot's penchant for speed freak therapy, but they too pay homage to their Jamaican roots. Where the former exaggerate the chaos of the Yardie's chat, the latter utilise the Studio One approach to space and time. Innovation may not be a compositional priority — Jungle/Tribal/Gang jazz beats swing on "Manga Breaks A Leg" and Gil Scott-Heron's best policies are re-run in "Crooked Places". However, in Finn they have a skilful rapper, capable of refreshingly open minded discourse (no non-homophobic, non-discriminatory clichés) and his assertive delivery overflows with Black pride. Even more encouraging is the presence of poetess Malika, whose Sun Ra-styled monologues are spotlit stage centre (no token Sista Souljah on display here).

Patriot Games serves not as jingoistic rabble rouser but as rallying cry for the beleaguered British hardcore community to bury the hatchet and fight the power. *Dark Tales From Two Cities* already signifies that enlightenment is upon us.

K. MARTIN



Jon Hassell/Brian Eno
Possible Musics
EDITIONS EG EGGCD 7 CD

Jon Hassell
Dream Theory In Malaya
EDITIONS EG EGGCD 12 CD

Subtitled *Fourth World* Volume One and Two respectively, these albums, reissued at mid-price, reveal Jon Hassell's music and theories coming into focus with the help of innovative production ideas from Brian Eno, Daniel Lanois and Hassell himself.

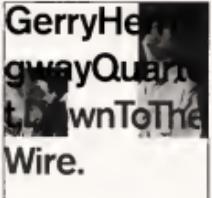
Whereas previous LPs such as *Earthquake Island* and *Vernal Equinox* had sounded like exotic sound concoctions, their Miles Davis/LaMonte Young/Terry Riley influences clearly apparent, the foggy production of *Possible Musics* effectively depicted a future world of dreamed, imaginary soundworlds.

After hearing a tape recorded by Daniel Lanois at the Lanois brothers' studio in Hamilton, Ontario, Eno had been impressed with the sound and began working there. The collaborative results were particularly striking on the Jon Hassell albums that followed. On the first of these, *Dream Theory In Malaya*, Hassell's pitch-shifted trumpet splits into looped smudges and aerated squirts on Eno's mix of "Chor More".

The expressionistic flurries and squeals of earlier recordings were replaced by an eerie, gaseous noise air, meat, lips and spit transformed by the technology of that early 80s instrument of magic, the AMS Digital Delay. This obliterated almost all associations of conventional instruments, pushing the music into a region of hypogenetic repeats, distant calls, muffled percussion, overlapping atmospheres and echoes.

Although the CD reissue of *Dream Theory* apologises for revealing "imitations of the source tape", the original vinyl pressings were real Rice Krispies jobs. This hardly enhanced quiet mixes such as "These Times". Hearing these two albums in a digital format gives a positive reason to praise the compact disc, for a change, as well as the music.

DAVID TOOP



**GerryHe
gwayQuar
t DownToThe
Wire.**

Hat Art: through Harmonia Mundi

BCM: through New Note

**On-U Sound: through
Pinacle/Revolver**

**Acoustics: 406 Washington St.,
Hoboken, NJ 07030, US**

Gerry Hemingway Quartet
Down To The Wire
HAT ART CD 6121 CD

Mark Whitecage And The Glass House Ensemble
Watching Pant Dry
ACOUSTICS ACO 406 CD/PC

Mark Whitecage And Liquid Time
Mark Whitecage And Liquid Time
ACOUSTICS ACO 406 CD/PC

Hemingway is probably better known for his work with Anthony Braxton's quartet, but discs under his own name continue to show an increasingly individual and confident perspective. This latest set includes his long-time Braxton partner, bassist Mark Dresser plus the great Dutch trombonist Wolter Wierbos, and the Europe-domiciled saxophonist and clarinetist Michael Moore. These are major talents. All the tunes (except one) come from Hemingway, the bouncy "Did You Like" and the stately "Waltz Anywhere" — which is not like most waltzes you've heard and most unlike the Viennese variety by which it was allegedly inspired — are stand-outs. Moore's "Debbie Warden" (not a world away from Monk's "Ask Me Now") concludes the set in the most extended version I've yet heard and features some lovely liquid clarinet.

Mark Whitecage is another sax/clarinet virtuoso (one of the major shifts of the 1990s seems to be the return of the clarinet as an instrument worth playing) whom I first heard in 1971 on an LP under Bobby Naughton's name. His mature work offers a generous and imaginative view of past and present: one not unlike Hemingway's (or Braxton's for that matter), so it's no great surprise to find the drummer turning up (along with bassist Mario Pavone from the Naughton years) in the Glass House Ensemble. It's a set full of nuance and elegance, from (mostly) cool to (occasionally) funky to (rarely) dramatic, never lacking interest, often texturally fascinating.

The Liquid Time disc returns to a classic trumpet/sax quartet format, and seems to insist on comparison with George Russell's sextet of the early 1960s (is it any coincidence

the recording engineer's name is Dave Baker?). It's not in fact imitative of that group but there is the same sense of discovering alternative structures without having to break apart an existing format. Trumpeter Dave Douglas contributes to this idea by playing as if he's studied with Don Ellis, while Whitecage's writing, and occasional Dolphy references, reinforce the impression of light and space. Not a bad track on it, genuinely worth seeking out.

JACK COOKE

His Name Is Alive
Mouth To Mouth
4AD CAD 3006 CD/PC/UP

Popular wisdom tells us that a book cannot be judged by its cover. Dismissing that, another question arises: can songs be judged by their titles? "My Feathers Needed Cleaning" and "Caroline's Supposed Demon" are examples from *His Name Is Alive*'s previous albums and if they hint at an obscure, precious muse at work, then you are getting warm. The Michigan band's name apparently came to founder and guiding light Warren Defever in a hyperglycemic hallucination, which even if apocryphal is definitely opposite. Their songs, dominated by Karn Oliver's pristine vocals, are bizarre creations that inhabit a world where disquieting shifts between beauty and ugliness are commonplace.

Mouth To Mouth, the group's third album, is their most accessible recording in that their obtuse approach is tempered, though never subjugated to the need to play it straight. A gorgeous cover of Big Star's "Blue Moon" stays close to pop territory and the guitars on "Toro" and "The Dirt Eaters" are cranked up, but their rock is tangential and jagged — nothing ever settles. *His Name Is Alive* specialise in experimental longshots which, when they come off, produce gems like the sweet melodies and aggravated cellos on "Cornfield". Through these 16 songs, ideas are scattered around like puzzle pieces. The way they finally fit together makes *Mouth To Mouth* compulsive listening.

DAVE MORRISON

Heinz Holliger
Scandanelly-Zylkus
ECM 437 441 CD

Holliger is probably the best oboist any of us ever heard, and this obscures his composing. He has been most interestingly productive in that direction, however, as the Morton-Collins Contemporary Composers' worldlist proves. His evening-long *Scandanelly-Zylkus* was written during 1975-85, 21 movements being premiered a few at a time in Donaueschingen, Stuttgart, in the latter year, then he added Ostrino Funeture in 91. The cycle was prompted by the late poems of Friedrich Hölderlin, a writer who, not so incidentally, was a considerable influence on Webern.

There are three sets of four songs for unaccompanied choir called *The Seasons* along with pieces for small orchestra which Holliger describes as "comments, mirrors, responses, marginalia" to the vocal movements. Tower Music for flute, small orchestra and tape, (*Böhrer*) for largely unaccompanied flute, plus *Ostrino Funeture*.

In comparison with some of Holliger's earlier pieces there is here a long distilled simplicity (consider the root position triads in "Spring 1") resulting in a rather extreme clarity of expression, an atmosphere wherein every vibration has significance. Holliger's music can initially seem remote, but the impression made by the Hölderlin cycle grows into something powerful as it becomes familiar, and one has a real sense of moving into unexplored territory.

Its two CDs are darkly siloed with thick and tall booklets, the former containing much of value; too bad ECM have issued it only in German.

MAX HARRISON

Kam
Nera Again
EAST WEST/STREET KNOWLEDGE 7547-92268 CD/PIC/LP

Professor Griff
Disturb N Tha Peace
MUSICIAN 110132 CD/PIC/LP

2Pac
Strictly For My NIGGAZ
EAST WEST/INTERSCOPE 752209 CD/PIC/LP

Chuck D once stated that HipHop is the CNN of the black community replacing all forms of mainstream communication. Here are three bulletins from the frontline trenches.

New South Central reporter Kam thinks as a true black man, able to understand his true nature and to foresee world hypocrisy through HipHop culturally. As with Ice Cube, he is a student of Elijah Muhammad, a scholar of 'street knowledge'. His chosen profession—investigative war journalism. Leaving no stone unturned, his in-depth research into the urban battlegrounds of the concrete jungle, on tracks like "Peace Treaty" and "Holiday Madness", provides him with the ammunition to fire home the truth to his people. A solid task force of producers — Torch Chamba, T-Bone, Solid Schorre, DJ Pooh — give him the necessary rhythmic flow to underpin his socio-political commentary. It takes an unquestionable focus and knowledge of self to stay a black man for life. Kam truly has NWA (*Negritude With Attitude*).

"These next few minutes are going to be intense" Professor Griff, the now solo public enemy, kicks off his new missive with "The Least We Forget", the voice sitting proudly on the Terminator X-style cut-up production that was absent from his first two albums. Page one carries the story, headlined "Blackdraft", of how black people all over the world are being recruited into the Nation of Islam in order to find themselves, their past and their future. "Colour Confrontation" opens the editorial section, which continues with the haunting cry and headline "Disturb N Tha Peace". The home news (headlines "7 Wozz Of Reality" and "God Bless AmerIKKa") informs the blackman that the vehicles for the continuing subordination of the masses are television, radio and the print media, with their lies, misquots and censorship of truth and knowledge. Griff's passionate solution to the problem is

unequivocal: "Phuck The MEDIA" ("Manic European Devils In Action). The women's section has Griff rapping creatively on a reworked version of the James Brown classic "It's A Man's World", telling us that "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world" and is the savour of the original man. This is no 'rag' and Professor Griff's prophetic message is that "until you pay the bill we are going to it" (remember the LA riots?) It concludes on a high note with "Black Thang", a long byline of respect to people that have stayed strong.

2Pac leads the militant tendency inside the Digital Underground collective, believing affirmative action is the only way to bring about change. "The Street: R Deathtow" states that the ghetto offers blacks no hope, just a painful death. There will be no peace without a revolution and that is "Something 2 Die 4". Statistics state that gang mentality and violence continues to destroy urban communities. However, the biggest gang in the city, any city, is the police — colour-coded cruising groups with guns ("Souljah's Revenge"). Supporting 2Pac are two notorious freedom fighters — Ice T and Ice Cube ("Last Wordz"). Together they are all "Representin' 93' NIGGAZ (Never Ignorant, getting goals accomplished)

TWA

Kronos Quartet
Short Stories
ELEKTRA 7555-79310 CD/PIC

Kronos Quartet
Gorecki String Quartets 1 & 2
ELEKTRA 7555-79319 CD/PIC

Short Stories is an assemblage of esoteric quartet pieces and arrangements spanning the 20th century in which Kronos appear more anxious than ever to emphasise their polyphony. There's barely time to recover from the atmospheric, dole-hung escape of Sofia Gubaidulina's Quartet No 2 before the strings metamorphose into a swarm of droning star-effects, accompanying Pandit Pran Nan's beautiful prayer for succour, "It Is My Turn, Oh Lord", and Terry

Riley's Lamboura. German experimental guitarist Steven Mackey indulges in some sexy antiguartet interplay in his spunkily "Physical Property", and contributes an arrangement of the Willie Dixon standard "Spooner", where the strings magnify and refashion the dry textures of blues guitar. "Spectre" by John Oswald is a temtily apocalyptic apparition the quartet become a medium through which a tongue of seething white noise unfurls out of the speakers into the room. Also featuring a strenuous John Zorn tribute to Tex Avery, this record is the Quartet's most adventurous yet.

All the elements of *fin de siècle* composition are present in the music of Henryk Gorecki repetition, furiously riffing forward motion, lagoons of uncertain calm. Yet Gorecki's success is not to explore these ideas for their own sake he harnesses the energy of accumulated sound to engineer a profound emotional response. His two string quartets, *Already It Is Dusk* and *Quas Una Fonte*, don't call for experimental technique, neither do they explore or feel their way towards some resolved trope of destination. A clue is in the cover photo of a shelled Warsaw street: this is music about an aftermath, a place or state of mind already in devastation. No space here to turn you onto the surface of the music itself suffice that it sustains its own serousness convincingly and inventively, and never finds such easy answers to suffering as the easy-ubiquitous 3rd Symphony.

ROB YOUNG

Little Annie
Short & Sweet
ON-U SOUND LP 80/CD 16

A past can be a difficult thing to leave behind. Little Annie will probably never escape her involvement — as Annie Anarchy — with South London anarchist collective Crass. A lovely bunch of people, they made indie music that was all but unlistenable [nonsense, you're thinking of Rudimentary Peni — Ed.]

Her more recent work with the likes of Fini Tribe and Coil promised much, but it's with this album that

she really delivers. And what she's delivered falls some way outside the normal run of On-U releases.

Of course, this record has the funky, dubwise sound you'd expect with Sherwood and Wimbish at the controls. But their journeys to the depth of the echo chamber, and any real weirdness, are kept firmly in check: they know what they're up against — Anne's lyrics, attitude, and extraordinary, versatile delivery. On the one hand, there are gentle and witty love songs, notably the beautiful "I think Of You", a stream-of-consciousness somewhere between a poem and a song, delivered over a warm, liquid rhythm. On the other, the devastating "Little Man", an ice-cold disco rhythm is the perfect foil for her role as lyrical assassin.

Through the whole of this smart and witty album, from the gentle musings on life, love and nothing in particular, you know that Anne knows exactly what she wants, and exactly what she's doing. A treat.

DAVID LUBICH

Lindberg/Mangelsdorff/Watson
Dodging Bullets
BLACK SAINT 120108 CD

Joe McPhee Trio

Impressions of Jimmy Guffre
CELP C 21 CD

The Dodging Bullets trio proves very compatible despite the differences in styles of the three musicians. At times pianist Eric Watson seems to imitate Cecil Taylor, although his solo spot on "Ceilings" (there is also a trio version of this exercise in expressing neurosis) is both spare and illusive. John Lindberg's acoustic bass is best heard on a number like "Shuffle Up", with its chase-like routine.

As for Mangelsdorff, his sound here is clear with little recourse to multiphonics. Some of his solos tend towards the scuffling, scattered habits of free jazz but the structures used throughout these numbers are tighter than most free music allows for. On "Four Feathers" there is a question and answer section between Mangelsdorff and Lindberg which harks back to the earliest idioms of

the music. Overall, there is a strength in depth on this release with one or two numbers (especially "Ceilings") standing out.

On Impressions of Jimmy Guffre bass clarinetist Andre Jaume and guitarist Raymond Boni join the saxophonist/trombonist Joe McPhee. There are four Guffre compositions along with compositions by the group members, and the Guffre number which stands out is the simple folk melody "The Train and the River" of which there are two versions here. This is an unusual tho whose sound does not always fit well together, although it might be a rare opportunity, if you value novelty, to hear a valve trombone and a bass clarinet together. Two of the tracks which feature McPhee's trombone and soprano saxophone suggest that the leader's chops might not have been in first rate condition when this recording was made. Altogether a disappointing effort with a great deal of inferior material offset by small successes like the quirky "Finger Snapper".

STEPHEN GRAHAM

Meathook Seed
Embedded
EARACHE MOSH BB CD

Old

The Musical Dimension of
Steakstak

EARACHE MOSH BB CD

With Earache having launched a Techno subsidiary, and Brutal Truth, Fear Factory, Meathook Seed, etc, all embarking on electro remix odysseys, it seems as if Arkore's ritualistic hedonism has finally attracted its supposed polar opposite. The sado-masochist hordes of grindcore descendants of the original Hardcore lineage have apparently hired MIDI sequencing to reclaim their riffs and aid the burl of their neanderthal image.

Meathook Seed, with their conjunction of Napalm Death and Obituary, don't seem like obvious candidates for the Techno title. Indeed, the first two thirds of Embedded only contain subliminal beeps and drones, as a monstrously expansive guitar sound brands each song with a clinical

precision. It's all reminiscent of early Prong x 10. Then endless circular sample loops introduce "Sea Of Tranquility". Turning the colour up full it induces a Trance state which is closer to Tangerine Dream than The Prodigy as its 14 minute dream machine rotations are set in perpetual motion.

Old's digital clump occupies the progressive area of the Techno/Grind spectrum, where technology is enlisted strictly for the purpose of ensuring an absolute headfuck. Jim Plotkin's guitar screams in praise of the multi-effects unit, leaving Bill Laswell's recent Praxis project stranded way back in the dust. Old score high on excess but low on substance. Their gratuitous tributes lead only to infinite maze. The notable exception being the haunting "Glitch", where the group ghost through their mechanical mutations.

The Arkore mixes of Embedded due to be released later this year, plus forthcoming Front Line Assembly remixes of Fear Factory will further cement the promising emergent relationship between Arkore and Hardcore. Long live the New Techno Grind

K. MARTIN

Stephen Micus
To The Evening Child
KCM 1486 513 780 CD

Stephen Micus

Listen To The Rain
JAPD 60060 815 614 CD

For two decades or so, German-born Stephen Micus has been something of a loner in contemporary music. Despite efforts to classify him as "world jazz", "world music" and even "New Age", he remains outside schools, traditions and fashionable considerations, remaining true to his own vision. He is a dedicated soloist who travels the world studying and playing instruments from numerous cultures, but is not concerned to play traditional music. Micus' aim has always been to search for new soundworlds by using traditional instruments in unconventional combinations.

To The Evening Child, his eleventh

album for ECM/Japo, features, in particular, the West Indian steeldrum. But don't expect calypso — Micus's characteristic mood is reflective, sometimes melancholy, and this album is no exception. Here the steeldrum is used in a subdued manner to create a gentle, drone-like pulse. "Equinox" best illustrates his sensitive use of multi-tracking three steeldrums, eight guitars (India), nay (Egypt) and korholt (Germany) produce a richly textured composition, chamber-like in feel, but ultimately unplaceable. Micus sings on four of the seven compositions and his wordless voice is at its most haunting on the opening "Nomad Song". The wistful sound of the bowed ukulele is also heard on Listen To The Rain, a reissue from 1983 "For Abai And Toghsan" (eight guitars, four Spanish guitars), the longest piece at 20 minutes, is further evidence of his skill as an arranger. The exotic splendour of the first "movement" recalls those evocative soundtracks by Popul Vuh for Werner Herzog. There is a place for Stephen Micus in every album collection.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

MC Solar
Qui Sème Le Vent Récolte Le
Tempo
**TALKIN LOUD/POLYDOR 5111131
CD/MCUP**

The warm welcome accorded to Mr Solar on this side of the channel is another cruel snub to the massed ranks of unsung British rappers. It's bad enough Americans coming over and getting preferential treatment, but a Frenchman! You could forgive the Demon Boyz for staking out the docks at Sheerness and beating up Talkin Loud's sweetly impudent truckers. Solar's though is far from the classically clueless French take on English language youth rebellion that cynics might anticipate. His Parisian posse might be called the 501 Social Force, but if you must name your gang after a pair of jeans, that's better than The Wrangler Squad. The man himself gave up a place at university studying modern languages to make himself a master of the most modern

language of all, and the results — "Autodidacte de rap, celle est la verte" — are never less than novel. It's no surprise which rap formulas lose most in the translation. Solaar's stabs at trad-rap machismo ("Doulement, impletum, indisputablement hardcore") go off entirely at half-cock, but in mellower mood his supple and elegant vocal style, from the same school as Gang Starr's Guru or Q-Tip from A Tribe Called Quest, is a good deal more convincing. His DJ Jimmy Jay is no mug either, as the all-round cappuccino ambience and delightful snatches of The Professionals theme in "Quarter Nord" demonstrates. Whether anyone can be forgiven for the line "ses herniotomes étoient plus gros que les sens dé Samantha Fox" is quite another matter.

BEN THOMPSON

Mott The Hoople

Mott The Hoople/Mad Shadows
EDELS EDCB 361 CD

"Surely not Ian Hunter in *The Wire* again," comes the anguished cry of a distraught readership. I'm afraid so. Not just Ian but the rest of the lads too — Mick, Verden, Overend and Buffin. This admirable two for the price of one resists is not the proto-Suede glam savage period Mott of "Red Away The Stone," etc., which everyone loves, but earlier, when Bob Dylan, not David Bowie was the band's guiding star. The first three songs, all covers of sorts, are an object lesson in how to make yourself a band 25 years ago. The Kinks + Doug Sahm + Sonny Bono = Mott The Hoople; school science was never as satisfying as this. Their version of Bono's "Laugh At Me" is magnificent, but the next song "Backsliding Fearlessly" ("So come off ye faithful and slaughter your lambs") is the killer blow — this is not just any Bob Dylan impersonation, this is copyism approached with such commitment it is actually better than the real thing. The 11 minutes of "Half Moon Bay" are not a moment too long either, with Hunter's beautiful, cracked but not faltering voice as resonant as it can be. The second album *Mad Shadows* was widely

Black Saint, Celp: through Harmonia Mundii

EFZ, ECM, Baja, JAPD: through New Note

Eraache: through Pinnacle

Miles Music: Little London, Market Place, Hingham, Norfolk NR9 4AF

considered a disappointment at the time, but stands up pretty well here, though it comes as no surprise to learn that the concluding "When My Mind's Gone" ("What once was straight is now unsightly... what was cold is now uncold") was recorded under hypnosis. That is certainly the way to listen to it.

BEN THOMPSON

Jim Mullen

Soundbites
EFZ 1003 CD

Itchy Fingers

Full English Breakfast
ENJA ENJ-7065 CD

Alan Skidmore Quartet

East to West

MILES MUSIC MH 061 CD

Guitarist Jim Mullen remains an undervalued, and certainly under-recorded, artist, and Soundbites comfortably stands its ground with a lot of the bigger name competition from across the Atlantic. It is a pristine set of slick, intelligently controlled contemporary jazz, featuring eight tunes by the guitarist, and one each by Bob Mintzer and Thelonious Monk.

Mullen has been ploughing this kind of furrow for some time, and has it down to a fine art, although it gets a little too laidback in places. His lyrical, beautifully structured solos are, like the strongly melodic tunes themselves, compounded from an amalgam of bop-derived harmonic thinking with a strong overlay of fusion, and he is ably assisted by Dave O'Higgins on saxes, Laurence Cottle on bass and Ian Thomson on drums, all of whom are entirely in this territory.

O'Higgins pops up again on *Full English Breakfast*, as a fully fledged member of the newest incarnation of saxophone quartet Itchy Fingers. You would never mistake this band for one of the American quartets, they have a very distinct feel of their own which I suspect is in large part down to Mike Mower's breezy, intricate, arrangements made all the more complex here by some judicious studio in-filling behind the soloists. Their playing, both in ensemble and as soloists, is

impressive, and their rhythmic sense never runs out of control, despite some tricky time signatures. It's not just clever, though, there is a lot of cogent, hard-edged incisive music-making going on here.

The Alan Skidmore Quartet should really be plural, since the disc is compiled from two club dates separated by two and a half years, with two different rhythm sections, the first (1989) with Stan Tracey, Roy Babington and Clark Tracey, the second (1992) with Steve Melling, Mick Hutson and Bryan Spring. Stan Tracey stamps his unmistakable mark all over the earlier session, and the saxophonist, always a muscular and inventive soloist, responds in kind, but is arguably heard in more characteristic vein on the later cuts, all Coltrane tunes. As ever, the benevolent shadow of Trane is never too far away in his playing.

KENNY MATTHEWSON

Pavement

Wesling (By Musket And Sextant)
BIG CAT AB40 CD/MLP

Sugar

Beaster

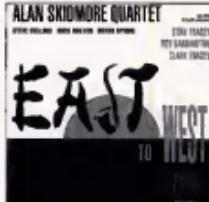
CREATION CRE 153 CD/MLP

Wire

Wire

MUTIS CDSTUMPH116 CD

I'm not sure exactly what it is that make US metalstomkers Pavement transpire the accusation of being Fall imitators — but it's something they can clearly live with the accusation, having ripped up this collection of early scraps (predating the excellent *Slanted And Enchanted* LP) in a pastiche of Fall sleeve raggedness, the very embodiment of ME Smith's resounding dictum ("Have a bleeding guess"). Pavement's flailing extremities also do for me certain things that for some reason Sonic Youth never did. I think it's because les Youth have a discernible stance and modus operandi whereas these guys don't — they genuinely are from a Planet of Noise where every shriek and judder is imbued with a festive, permickey junk-food casualness. *Wesling* is a fabulous imitant. What I can't quite take with the



much lionised Sugar — the retro-power-trio led by Bob Mould — is a sense of purpose and adult confidence that I can't help feel is misplaced in rock. On this mini-LP there's too much testosterone guitar bustle, adding up to the same doughtiness that characterised The Who once they'd renounced pop's adolescent follies. The veneer of wax self-conscious about the band's darker side, about God, despair, and a whole different kettle of fish from their hyperventilating Copper Blue LP. From here, it sounds like much of the stolid same, albeit with its moments: the martial "JC Auto" and a very anomalous closing track "Walking Away", which has a rare Brian Wilson shimmer to it.

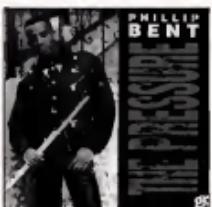
Wire practically invented the possibilities of mixing adult lugubriousness with kid-hormonal chord crunching, but dropped it as soon as they had the chance (as far back as the extraordinary "I Am The Fly"). The current compilation is from the band's second incarnation on Mute, from *The Ideal Copy* onwards. They re-emerged just at the right time for their sardonic, inscrutably flip disco mutation. Maintained over a few albums, the lustre wore thin — too elliptical, too pretty, and Colin Newman's sour lemon vocals give less a sense of critical distance than of can't-be-fagged disgruntlement. The risks, taken track at a time, are shiny enough, but overall the shame is that a band who in their time mapped out the margins so persuasively finally moved too close to mainstream methods to be anything but utterly marginal.

JONATHAN ROMNEY

Paul Pignon/Raymond Strid

Far From Equilibrium
ALICE MUSIC PRODUCTION ALCD 007

Quite gorgeous free play from Sweden here. Percussionist Strid is a member of the trio Gush, who recently played in London and whose Dragon disc *From Things To Sounds* (DRCC 204) is absolutely brilliant. Strid's percussion approach is gutsy, though highly refined and thoroughly worked-out; big sounds, broad palette, rich in texture, potent bursts, very little in terms of sustained metrical or



Alice Music: CDA, Box 4225, S-10263, Stockholm, Sweden

IDR: In & Out, Granatgasse 3, W-7800 Freiburg, Germany

Percaso: Rec Rec, Magnustrasse 5, CH-8004, Zurich

Black & Blue: 431A Baena Vista Road, New City, New York 10556, USA

Enja: through New Note

propulsive energy. There's a Lovens-like love of pingpong metal, sawing cymbals, and deep, rolling toms. He also plays a fair amount of percussive (mostly open-stringed) guitar and amplified objects — both a la Hugh Davies in spots he uses some combination of the above, often squeaking, striking and kicking things together in a unison pattern.

Pignon employs about equal parts B-flat clarinet and bassoon horn. On both, he's terrific, making both a responsive/suggestive partner and a fine soloist ("Reeds In The Mud", "Wriggle" and "Squirt"). On "Crumpled Foil", while Strid monkeys with a tightly-wound whammy bar and volume pedal, Pignon is at work on his own volume shifts, stuffing a nasal tone from one of the clarinet's orifices to another. There is also a two cut with bassist Niklas Bliström, which demonstrates how different group dynamics become with the addition of just one more player. Aside from his beautiful newwork, Pignon contributes an insightful liner-text which draws out cool connections between improvised music, John Cassavetes and thermodynamic theory.

JOHN CORBETT

Porno For Pyros
Porno For Pyros
WEA 936 245 2281 CD

If nothing else, this album is proof of the old dictum that in order to improvise, you need to know what you are going to improvise from. Perry Farrell always did have one of the most distinctive voices in rock, but with his new band Porno For Pyros, formed after the wilful self-destruction of Jane's Addiction in 1991, he seems to have replaced his formerly expressionistic stream of yelpings and mewlings with a 'proper' voice — all scat-sighs and voice-trained falsettos, confidently escalating and descending according to whim or the dictated of the song. Not only that, but he's complemented this dramatic improvement in technique with songs that, purely in terms of composition, put much that Addiction wrote to shame.

And with a band that's as flexibly disciplined as you could hope to

get, he seems to have finally found the musicians he needs to improvise around — laying down a lightweight scatterfunk filled out with subtle sampling and obvious jazz-rock influences. From the evidence of songs like "Pete's" and "Blood Rag", Perry's not just abdicated his crown as one of the biggest rock stars of recent years; he's all but abdicated from rock entirely, in search of newer fields. A brave almost wholly successful stab in a very unexpected direction.

JAKUBOWSKI

Jason Rebello
Keeping Time
RCA 7432112904 CD/MC

Phillip Bent
The Pressure
GR 96942 CD/MC

Vibraphonic
Vibraphonic
ACID JAZZ JAZIO 63 CD/MC/LP

JTO
Supernatural Feeling
BIG LIFE BLR 21 CD/MC/LP

With the release of *Keeping Time* and the demise of his presenter's role in BBC2's *Cearas* culture 'zine *Antropus*, Jason Rebello's wannabe gaze is now firmly back on Herbie Hancock. This is surely a move of great maturity on the part of the pianist — whichever way you looked at it, Herbie was always going to provide a more productive role model than Richard Jobson "Silver Surfer", "Eraserhead" and "Little Man" all bear trace elements of The Headhunter's early riddes on the urban fusion ticket — genuine, probing improvisations (Rebello, guitarist Tony Remi) floating up through liquid backbeats, they approach the problematic elisons of jazz funk from both ends of the equation with equal force.

Two tracks, "Permanent Love" and "Swings & Roundabouts", feature the voice of Jocelyn Brown. The standards by which entry to the UK soul underground is monitored have fallen drastically recently (how else to account for the meteoric rise of a group like Jamiroqua — apart from the obvious, lingering question of industry racism). They have yet to

fall so far however, that they need accommodate such opportunist by-rote gestures as these.

On the evidence of *The Pressure* Philip Bent wants to be Hubert Laws circa 1972 but is already in danger of becoming the Herbie Mann of his generation "The World Is A Ghetto" and "Freedom Jazz Dance" (with "Sex Machine" sample, yet) are such obvious covers — even filtered through current, bogus Jazz-Not-Jazz methodologies, they come out sounding flat and laboured, downgrading rather than restating the originals' spirit and uplift.

Bent's understanding of contemporary soul sounds as intellectually-challenged as Rebello's — "The Pressure", "James" and "Swing Time" are instantly disposable pieces of digital R&B, purged of all original thought and momentum. In this context, the ballads "Black Pain" and "In A Sentimental Mood" sound almost radical — foregrounding the flute for a few languid moments of spatial suspension.

Vibraphonic lack even the cursory jazz pedigrees (ahem) of Rebello and Bent but their soul's in the right place — somewhere between the Black urban meltdowns of Chapter & The Verse and the effortless sophistication of a group like D-Influence. Guitarist Tony Remi and vibes player Roger Beaujolais seem to be everywhere at the moment and their tight, driving solos are all over this project. Source material and surface detail shifts from track to track — disco, Garage, a Techno bassline, metal guitar — but most of the record sounds like Steps Ahead made over for the UK soul-jazz crossover market. There's nothing here to compare with the amphetamine delirium of The Vince Montano Sextet's "Heavy Vibes" or the Salsoul Orchestra's "Ooh I Love It (Love Break)", but it's better than Acid Jazz's other current 33 offering — The Humble Souls, hopelessly in thrall to Galliano on *Thoughts And Sound Paintings* — and it will do until a Young Disciples-Orphy Robinson collaboration comes along. I first saw JTQ (formerly The James Taylor Quartet) some years ago supporting the Brand New

Heavies. At the time I had them down as Dr Feelgood to the Heavies' Showaddywaddy On Supernatural Feeling the group attempt to reinvent themselves in post-Dingwalls, Jazz-Not-Jazz vernacular, but nothing has happened in the intervening years to sway that original judgement.

The best thing about Supernatural Feeling is the voice of Noel McKoy — a hoarse and imploring disembodied soul haunting digitalised Rare Grooves on tracks like "See A Brighter Day" and the perennial "Love The Life". It's all totally derivative, of course, particularly the tracks that plough the Cosmic Echoes/Starship Orchestra furrow. Typical of 99 per cent of the UK's soul-jazz output, this is music that sounds as if it could have been recorded yesterday or two decades ago.

NATHAN WEST

Roots

Salutes The Saxophone
IOR 7016 CD

Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy

The Fire This Time
IOR 7019 CD

Arthur Blythe, Nathan Davis, Chico Freeman and Sam Rivers are the four saxophonists in Roots, but it's not a sax quartet. A selection of solos are prioritized over joint efforts, an on form Don Pullen is given equal footing and there's good bass and drum support. Salutes to the greats with covers of "Parker's Mood", "Impressions" and "St Thomas" are lifted from the "why do it?" question by the combined talent and energy of the ensemble rather than reinterpretation. If it's an archive at least it's a living one.

As the Roots release makes clear, the saxophone, for better or worse, is the archetypal jazz instrument — which is why Lester Bowie left it out of the Brass Fantasy line-up. And of these two groups, the Fantasy approach to the relationship between past and present is the more dynamic one (roots here being Billie Holiday, Civil Rights, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, their contemporary representations, the LA rebellions, Michael Jackson, Fantasy's own work.) Lester Bowie has always been serious about his

fun and deceptively funny about the serious. Indeed, on this live recording they play the scathing re-interpretation of "Strange Fruit" first done (slightly tighter) on the Senus Fun studio album. There's a fine "Journey Towards Freedom" by band member EJ Allen, and Michael Jackson's "Black Or White" is lively (and doesn't suffer the beat-squashed flatness of Fantasy's previous Jackson cover "Thriller"). And it all ends with "The Great Pretender". Of course.

ANDREW POTHECARY

Sister Sledge

The Very Best Of Sister Sledge
EAST WEST 594831816 CD/MCPLP

For anyone of a certain age, the four Sledge sisters are the personification of '70s disco-nights, luxur boot-tubes and flared hards. With Chic's Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards penning and producing global hits like "Lost In Music" and the peerless "We Are Family" (backing vocals, one Luther Vandross), the Philadelphia quartet were set to become one of pop's most successful girl groups. With 12 tracks that include Steve Anderson remixes of "Family" and "Lost", The Very Best is a magnificent testament to some of dance music's finest hours.

The compilation stresses the Sledges' own strengths across a range of producers. There's pre-Chic material ("Mama Never Told Me"), a self-produced version of Mary Wells's "My Guy", and Narada Michael Walden's "All American Girls", before returning to Rodgers' "Frankie" (a slightly dippy UK number one). Importantly, this album avoids suggesting the group to be little more than the sum of their producers. If Rodgers and Edwards offered a disco firmly rooted in all the traditions of a Salsoul-esque orchestration (that is, strings not pings), then the Sledges provided vocals that took their harmonies straight out of gospel and their sassiness from R&B lyrics like "Lost in music / I feel so alive! / Ma-nine-to-five" may not have won any major poetry prizes but to anyone who'd felt the call of a perfect beat they spoke volumes.

This album enters a British chart that's currently caught on a wave of

70s nostalgia, from which it's difficult to disassociate Sister Sledge completely. However, unlike Abba, platform shoes and glitterwear, it's hard to remember a time when Sister Sledge weren't openly favoured by club DJs. "We Are Family" was adopted by feminists and gays as their joint anthem years ago. Ever since 1988, when Danny Rampling's Acid House audience at Shoom lapped up "Thinking Of You" ("... and the things you do to me / You made me love you / Now I'm living in ecstasy") with knowing smiles, the song's been a predictable favourite (to say nothing of Maureen's cover hit with it in 1990).

LOUISE GRAY

Nathaniel Su/Michael Kanan

Mama's Place
PERCASOID CD

David Byrds/Byard Lancaster

Lightnin' Strikes
BLACK AND BLUE 59221 CD

Roy Brooks

Duet in Detroit
ENJA ENJ 7067 CD

The Art Of The Duo, if it hadn't been used for a fine Lee Konitz/Albert Mangelsdorff collaboration, would be an apt title for any of these excellent albums. On Mono's Place, Konitz follower Nathaniel Nu teams up with pianist Michael Kanan for a very enjoyable run through standards and Cool School variations. The fairly familiar "317 East 32nd" is "Out Of Nowhere", Su's own "Kyle's Ahead" isn't "Miles Ahead" but "My Melancholy Baby". The alto tone may be harder-edged than Konitz's, but the pianist is clearly influenced by the totally individual style of Lennie Tristano. "Yardbird Suite" is pure counterpoint till the closing chords — and throughout there's a clean, clear quality to the improvising.

The "Lightnin'" of Lightnin' Strikes is Lightnin' Hopkins, whose influence David Byrds expresses, surprisingly, through the cello — an electric version -- and an unusual set of compositions. The blues inspiration of Omette and the 60s New Thing is made naked and explicit, especially in the perching tone of saxist Byard Lancaster, who

was there at the time in Sunny Murray's band. Other numbers, where Byard's flute is featured, are more quiet and folksy. Some distance from the more oblique discourse of *Mona's Place*.

The most remarkable playing on these duos albums comes, however, from drummer Roy Brooks with Woody Shaw. Of the unfulfilled trumpet greats of modern jazz, Shaw's case is in many ways the saddest because he survived into maturity without ever finding an enduring context for his genius. Any recording which finds him at his prime, as this one does, is to be valued, but the tone and phrasing convey a special warmth in the exposed setting. "Elegy For Eddie Jefferson" is the outstanding *Duet in Detroit*. In the others Roy Brooks plays "soul" and steel drums as well as the trap kit, and partners pianists — Randy Weston, Don Pullen and the young Geri Allen. Despite the changing personnel and recording over a six-year period (1983–9), this is a collection that holds together well.

ANONY HAMILTON

Suede
Suede
HUGO TCD

Courtney Love — doing the letters page in a rock weekly — replies to Suede fan Chickstick of the Fens, 3/4/93: You're a patrot culture, a patrot caste culture. **YOU MUST HAVE YOUR OWN ICONS** They must be purely British, working class, white and male; slightly swagging, a little cocky and indigenously sexy in a PURELY WHITE MALE BRITISH WAY, as tradition and archetype dictate. To which I say, yes, it's a white thing, Courtney, I understand it, I've lived in its shade. From Ray Davies to Bowie to Steve Harley to Pete Shelley to Howard Devoto to Morrissey, there's a tradition of fey white boys who've staged their masculinity as a fragile masquerade. They've internalized it, given permission to generations of white male youth to dwell and linger on their alienation. It's boy to boy love, Courtney, and Suede are its heirs. You're not part of it, Courtney — you've got your own thing going on. The elements of

Suede's music — buzz saw guitar, string section flourish, that whine which says, yeah, you know me — gives originally the burn's rush innovation sm't in it. Recognition is what counts. All the singles — "Metal Mickey", "The Drowners", "Animal Nitrate" — are here. Already they feel dated, classic. Phrases such as "glam" and "the '70s" try to name the peculiar sensation this music has of receding into the past as soon as you've heard it the first time. Suede's debut is a collection of knowing love letters to themselves, and it's this narcissism which their fans love — the moment on "Breakdown" when Brett sings, "Have I gone too far inside my mind?" All I know, Courtney, is that there's no black interiority in this country. It doesn't exist, that sense of secrecy and vulnerability. Bands like Living Colour, Naked Truth, I wish I could say they cut it, but they don't. Of course, some of my best friends say this poetry is a luxury, a diversion, something most black folk don't have time for. I know this, but I don't feel it, Courtney. The point is, Suede are privileged. They can give themselves up to whatever they want. They don't even have to hold back. I envy them. It's a white thing, Courtney. You understand.

KOOWHO ESHUN

James Tenney
Selected Works 1961–69
ARTIFACT FP 0011 ART 1007 CD

Back in the days when electronic instruments had valves, and impressionable youngsters, high on Stockhausen and Cage, defined the idea of performance a little too widely for everyone's comfort, music like Tenney's was made.

Recorded when the composer was working at Bell Labs and various electronic studios, Tenney's 60s works (here released for the first time) used computer-generated composition techniques and an early digital synthesis program. "College No. 1 (Blue Suede)" rooms the radio band, picking up some Elvis, and is a prime example of American *musique concrète*. "Dialogue" and the Varèse-dedicated "Phases" result from mathematical templates inserted in the program. "For Ann

(Rising)" is an endlessly repeated modulation, as justifiably minimal as Young's *Composition No. 7*.

What else these uncomfortable compositions achieve other than a studied experimentalism is hard to decide: it would be fun — if unlikely — to stick Tenney's CD into the covers of a Taverner release and watch the reactions of the New Transcendentalists, but beyond such naughtiness, Tenney is best left as a footnote in the history of computer-generated music.

LOUISE GRAY

Truman's Water
Smash Smash vox ox ox & Ass
ELEMENTAL ELM LP/CD

Too many well-educated Americans have time on their hands, and thank goodness for that. The emergence of Truman's Water hints at an imminent third wave of invading US guitar acts among whom Pavement would be in the nearer rather than the van in terms of obliqueness. As the title makes clear, these are not people who believe in linear expression. Their lyrics are composed by a single rather than the proverbial roomful of monkeys. Their debut album *Qif Thruk Thum* was played in its entirety over the airwaves by an ecstatic John Peel, he must have been engaged in some kind of downward listening drive. At first it's just that same old guitar frazzle topped off with sore throats straining for truth in obscurity, but it takes a perilously short time to get Truman's Water on the brain. There is the occasional longueur courtesy of blatant folding about in Sonic Youth style, but mostly this is a compelling scratch and scream sensation. "Good Blood After Bad" is one definite highlight, and the second half of the double album can be kept in reserve for when the listener's head has got around the first bit. Truman's Water say "what it actually ends up smelling of is totally secondary to the things that make it smell, but the blame seems to lie somewhere between Cul De Sac and Troubiefunk. Now their San Diego-based Justice My Eyes/Elevated Loin label threatens to flood the market with such kindred spirits as Drive Like Jehu, Heavy Vegetable and

Powerdressing. Would they be pleased if others followed their lead? If they embarrassed us by making us look backwards and stupid, then yes definitely."

BEN THOMPSON

François Tusques
Le Jardin des Délices
IN SITU 590139 CD

Denis Colin Trio
Trots
IN SITU 590138 CD

I can't claim previous familiarity with these artists, but the sound and musical approach has something very French about it, notably in *Le Jardin des Délices*. Pianist François Tusques leads a five piece band on his set, which has the feel of a through-produced conception with linking musical and thematic strands, rather than just a string of songs.

The music draws on stratagems derived from the European improvised music scene of the last couple of decades, but also on the French tradition of literary cabaret songs, sung or spoken in fairly radical fashion by Isabell Juarez. The effect is rather cerebral much of the time, with open, spacious, uncongested musical textures and a playful, exploratory ambience, although it grows both denser and darker in places.

Clairenet Denis appears as one of the soloists in Tusques' group, but his own disc is more urgent and immediate in its impact, and more direct in its musical language, especially in its rhythmic aspects. The line-up is unusual but effective, featuring Colin's bass clarinet alongside Pablo Cueco's zarb and berimbau, and Didier Petit's cello for the "organic" combination of wind, string and skin, as the sleeve-note points out, and invites a splendid mixing up and recasting of idioms.

KENNY MATHIESON

Van der Graaf Generator
Time Vaults
MAGNUM CDTB 106 CD

Peter Hammill
The Noise
FE 9104 CD

competitions

Greg Osby

Nubian Tales

London Jazz Festival



CD/baseballcap competition

If you want to get ahead, get a hat. Or more specifically a baseball cap, worn with the peak to the side (natch) and logoed with the name of the nuffest sax player in the 'hood (that's Greg Osby to you). We've got ten of these millinery masterpieces to give away (courtesy of EMI/Blue Note), plus ten copies of Greg's new CD *3-D Lifestyles*, in which Hip-Hop, jazz and street soul are Robocheated into a slammin' new mix. To win a cap and CD, give us the titles of two of Greg's previous albums. **NB** The closing date for this competition is Tuesday 1 June

Cinema tickets competition

From 19–29 May, Nubian Tales present 'Jazz On The Big Screen' at London's Prince Charles cinema. The season features vintage footage of Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins and others, as well as screenings of Martin Scorsese's *New York, New York* and Bruce Weber's *Let's Get Lost*. We've got a pair of tickets for each screening in the season to give away to one lucky winner. To get your hands on them, tell us the names of the male and female leads in *New York, New York*? **NB** The closing date for this competition is Wednesday 12 May

Concert tickets competition

The LJF is May's premier jazz blow out — over 90 events spread over three weeks featuring some of the greatest names in world jazz. We've got four special NOMAD tickets to give away (courtesy Serious/Speakout), which allow free entry to nine concerts (including WSQ, Anthony Braxton, Stan Tracey, Rebirth Brass Band) plus concessionary tickets to other festival events. To enter give us your ideal music fest line up (all genres) — the most flippant, dumb, impossible, etc. win. **NB** The closing date for this competition is Monday 10 May

Send your entries on a postcard (marked with the relevant competition, e.g., 'Osby', 'Nubian Tales', 'Jazz Fest') to May Competitions, The Wire, 45–46 Poland Street, London W1V 3DF.

Congratulations to our March competition winners — Muze CDs go to Marig Lambson, North Yorks; R. Schakenbae, Worcs; Robert Clark, Surbiton; R. A. Stow, Northampton; Oliver Mayne, Nottingham; John Adams CDs go to Ali Eley, Worcs; Robert Long, Plymouth; B. Russell, London; Ola Nilsen, Norway; T. A. Ossashwasy, Canada; Menig t-shirts and posters go to John Barber, Leeds; Ian Wickens, Dorset; Sanyi Sachdev, London; Bernard Lyons, Belfast; C. Le Bek, Bristol; A. Johnstone, Scotland; Neil Hussey, Staffs; John Rat, Northern Ireland; B. E. Pidher, Essex; F. Serierens, London; Menig t posters go to Kevin J. Letts, Hemsheyse, Steve Maddock, Norfolk; Colin Gould, Hereseyside; David Ward, Surrey; Glenn Buckley, Surrey; D. Walling, London; Michael Clayton, Sussex; Marion Rechart, London; Chin Mitchell, Glasgow; Roger Little, Westford; Ian Taylor, Middlesex; Alan Lawson, Bucks; James Allen, Hampshire; Richard Ashbridge, Essex; Richard Smith, Sheffield

Time Vaults, Peter Hammill says, "is intended for those who are already VdGG aficionados!" It's an "anti-compilation" of rehearsal tapes and rough mixes from 1972-75 (the so-called lost period between *Pawn Hearts* and *Gobblin'*) which underlines the eccentric and somewhat experimental nature of the British progressive rock group. Had it been released in this form in 1975 on the Virgin label, we might now be talking about another *Faust Tapes*; instead, it first came out in 1984 in limited supply, six years after the group's demise, and hardly anybody noticed. But then VdGGs were always out on a limb. Not part of the Canterbury or Virgin scenes (which now hold the monopoly on "worthwhile" '70s prog rock), it was easier to push them out to the margin and file under "cult band". Still, there's plenty of zip here: driving percussion, Power Jackson sax, bizarre cuts and joins, and not forgetting maniac/theatrical Hammill vox.

Peter Hammill's solo career (in operation since 1971) has also been conducted at the margin of rock, due mainly to poor and/or misdirected publicity. Nevertheless, the albums keep coming: idiosyncratic collections of bleak love and philosophical/scientific songs. *The Nose* is number 23 (including two compilations and a live album) and the second, featuring new material, to be released on his own recently founded *Fei* label.

Last year's *Freships* was calm, brooding, notable for its delicate, detailed arrangements. In contrast, *The Nose* is heavier, guitar-based and, presumably, intentionally less about subtlety. The guitars (Hammill and John Ellis) are standard, riff-laden heavy rock, and Manny Elias's drumming is not a patch on Guy Evans' busy polyrhythms. Hammill was probably after something fierce and compelling but has ended up with an album that's as MOR as ZZ Top.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Sandor Veress
Works For Strings
ECD 437 440 CD

Having studied composition with Kodály and the piano with Bartók,



Veress worthily represented the next generation of Hungarian composers. He died last year at 85. This record is a tribute, and includes Bach's Suite No. 7 for unaccompanied cello, finely played, with an expressively woody tone, by Thomas Demenga. This is here because of Veress's admiration for Bach, which deepened throughout his life, providing the standard whereby he measured all creative activity, even the most radical. But that never tempted him to adopt neo-baroque or neo-classical subterfuges, and his Sonatas for unaccompanied cello are never in Bach's shadow. Equally, they can stand beside the solo works for these instruments by Kodály and, later, Bartók.

The Violin Sonata of 1935, incisively performed by Hansheinz Schneeberger, is notable for its complex polyphony, this representing as great a feat of instrumental writing as of composition. Demenga is heard again in Veress's Cello Sonata, a work that dates from 1967 and hence obviously belongs to a quite different phase of the composer's development. Its three movements are an elaborately worked out but absolutely concise Dialogue, a Monologue whose introversion is at once forbidding yet paradoxically communicative, and an explosive, almost frenzied, Epilogue. Schneeberger and Demenga are joined by Tabita Zimmermann (viola) for Veress's *Trio* of 1954, a work that, like several others from around that time, integrates aspects of serial technique into what by then was a highly personal musical language to remarkable effect.

MAX HARRISON

Various Artists
Mowin' On Vol 3
RUMOUR RUE 302 COMP/CLP

The Rumour label's *Mowin' On* series is shaping up to be a Streetsounds for the '90s. Or at least a monochromatic version of the same. In the '80s, Morgan Khan's much-venerated label capsized the exclusivity of urban dance outlets, import 12"s, limited edition promos and white labels, by transferring hard-to-find tracks in

original full-length mixes from across the dance music spectrum onto cheap, easily-accessible compilation albums. *Win Mowin' On*, Rumour repeat the formula, but this time with the focus on the post-Soul II Soul UK R & B community.

Volume three is the best in the series yet. The deep bass R&B minimalism of *Moving In The Right Direction*'s "Slow And Easy", and the luminous roots consciousness of Vanessa Simon's "Revelation" might be immediate highlights, but this is a record with strength in depth. The layering of sweet voices and Black Church harmonies over sensual middle ground arrangements and Low End beats has become a cliché of *fin de siècle* soul — but it's a flexible formula, animating the soft/hard, spiritual/secular tensions that draw you into such contrasting tracks as Think Twice's Garage-y "Joy Is Free" and the retro-ambience of ACR's "Turn Me On".

NATHAN WEST

Various Artists
Pay It All Back Vol 4
ON-U SOUND 65 LP

A showcase for forthcoming releases and a welcome sign that, contrary to rumour, On-U Sound is not about to shut up shop. Label supremo Adrian Sherwood is increasingly reliant on a house band of Skip McDonald (guitar), Doug Wimbish (bass) and Keith LeBlanc (drums). In a way it's a pity, as it'd be great to hear him work his magic on some other forces (Prins Zoo, Jah Wobble, Jeff Lee Johnson, Spacemaid), but you can understand his being fixated on the sheer power of this thurimber.

Just as profoundly as Soul II Soul in the late '80s, On-U Sound presents a new twist on dance music — in this case a heavy, heavy funk that absorbs reggae but carries it into new territories that include guitar noise and industrial retlessness. At high volume, On-U Sound is both splendid and scary at domestic levels, hypnotic and warm.

A first listen had me worrying that the label can't find singers and songs to match its peerless musicianship and production.

ECM: through New Note

Blue Silver: through Sterns

Bvhaast: through Impetus

Rumour, On-U Sound: through Pinnacle/Revolver

However, Bernard Fowler (Peech Boys, Tackhead) soon wins you over via his voice's richness and commitment. Ben Sherman still has the honeyed charm of his lovers-rock roots, Jafal (ex-Lost Poets) sounds distinctly old-fashioned next to current rap sensations, but after a while the slow wisdom of his words convinces you. The only singer that doesn't grow is Scottish funkman-with-a-helmet Jesse Rae — finger-in-the-air balladry, get out of here!

The less-is-more sound palette and leftist chants are deceptively simple Shewards' unique mix of distant and up-front sounds is finely judged; you become entranced. The honesty and power of this music breed discontent with the compromises and collusions of the regular music industry.

BEN WATSON

Various Artists

Planete Rai — The Essential Series
COOKING VINYL GUMBOOON CD

Cheb Sadraoui/Chaha Fadela

N'Sel Fik
BLUES SILVER DB7 BSD150 CD

Planete Rai showcases recent songs by a series of 'Chebs' (a title adopted by young Algerian rebels in contrast to the 'Cheik' title of traditional musicians). The singing's great but overall the music is tame compared with Rai's mid-80s heights. Cheb Mami's 'Let Me Cry' uses chirpy synthetic reggae with a diabolical Euro-disco chorus and 'Douna Ala' is an attempt at a Rai 'Bridge Over Troubled Waters' (sic!). Cheb Tan's Casbah-dub is strong (shades of Jah Wobble). Throughout, clipped 4/4 bar-lines diminish the push-pull emotional trawling of traditional asymmetric metres. Concern for radio-friendly 'hooks' eclipses the intoxicating rhythmic impact that is Rai's strength.

Cheba Fadela and keyboard-playing husband Cheb Sadraoui reprise their 1985 'N'Sel Fik' track yet again on their new 1993 recording. Their music is less hit-oriented and gimmicky than the Planete Rai crew, though all kinds of weird flavours — flamenco, The Beat's urgency, Philly horns, Silver Convention, Pucon — pass

through. It has the tough-yet-sociable unrefinedness of Arab market-square bands (check the male chorus in 'Rah Gabi Min'), providing a solid core for the Techno-synths and metal-guitar embellishments.

BEN WATSON

Various Artists

Tun It Over 2. Bogle Meets Armstrong

MANGO CDM 1099 CD/MULP

Apache Indian

No Reservations

ISLAND ILPS 8801 2CD/CLIP

Since last we picked up (on) the mike of ragga, its weird cartoon voice has slouched into the pop charts — Shaggy's 'Oh Carolina' (a 'Feeling Line' for the 90s). Shabba's groovy (and positively antinomian) 'Mr Loverman', the snobiz novelty of Snow, and Apache Indian. Strange that the tunes of the last named — the nearest to 'real' ragga — should have garnered the lowest chart placings. Or is it? The popular perception of anything pertaining to (or featuring from) reggae still teeters, as it maybe always will, on the ledge of 'hokey'. But this is not necessarily a bad thing: it is part of its eternal promise — its musical liberation theology — that its rhyme and rhythm give instant release from subcultural notions of 'seriousness' and 'originality' version wise!

Two things: Jamaican Talkover is and has a history, which goes on regardless of occasional neglect or publicity, and second, there is nothing wrong with limited, temporal success — if Apache Indian were to be a short lived fad, a Take That of Talkover, then so what? This is pop music, and even if its success is only fleeting it's still (defiantly) in tune with UK 1993.

The fiercely modern sound of ragga tends to polarise — like many revolts into new style(s) it offends as many people as it ensnares (the question of Shabba and Banton and the offense of homophobia belongs to a different article). But the elemental drive of ragga (and its ever multiplying genres like Bogle and Armstrong, etc) is the production. This is what separates these two records

Apache's strength is his persona(e), his lyrics — he is entirely engaging, agile, educative rather than erant. The So-Fi lure of the Tun It Over tracks (22 of them) — gathering together just about every vocal and production team you need to know about — is the raw sheen of the production — none of the performers has half Apache's wit, in any sense, but their grain, the way they vocally surf the music, is what hooks you: overlapping, springing, rolling and ganging, it goes against the Western pop norm of a straight vocal line. The bubbling synth bass interlaces with the burbling vocal, like someone has lifted the lid off something potentially infinitesimal for three mins. fatally addictive stuff.

Still, Apache is vastly entertaining (his lyrics are reproduced — is this a first for ragga? — verbatim on the inner sleeve), and anyone who says he is just a 'hokey' is missing the point: his articulation of a certain life is actually nearer the rule than the exception — and it's the fault of Brit culture (nil films, confused youth tv, a retro chart) that his take on the world sounds so exceptional.

This language — whatever reggaeraggatalkover is calling itself this month — is immediately recognisable to its own constituency — as shared as a common joke, and as dependent on being shared. The voices here may be quickly superceded, but that is the point — three cheers for a (new) jukebox economy in a CD age.

IAN PENMAN

Xenakis Ensemble

Xenakis, Tsoupaki, Del Puerto
BVHAST CD 9219 CD

Ton Bruynel

Looking Ears 1

BVHAST CD 9214 CD

The Xenakis Ensemble disc features three recent works by Greek composer Iannis Xenakis, and single works by two younger composers, all recorded live in front of what must be the quietest audience in history at the Festival Nieuwe Muzeek between 1990-92.

Two pieces are for solo

instruments. Xenakis's *Rebounds* (1987-89) explores both rhythmic patterning and the textural and timbral possibilities realised by moving from skin to woodblock percussion. A younger Greek composer, Kalliope Tsoupaki, wrote *Mono* (1988) for solo violin, but its dense chords fall short of the "exaltation" the programme note describes. Spanish composer David Del Puerto's *Concerto For Oboe And Chamber Ensemble* (1992) is well-constructed, but not especially striking. The other Xenakis pieces are both strong works, but I marginally prefer *Syzygeos* (1989), for cello and ensemble, to the string quintet *Alejo* (1986), in part because of cello soloist Rohan de Saram's boldly delineated performance. Both, though, reveal Xenakis's trademark concerns for intricacies of structure juxtaposed with raw emotionality of content.

Ton Bruynel's long-standing speciality is electronic music, and the eight works featured here combine his electronically-generated soundtracks with a single instrument or, in the case of *Denk Mai Das Denkmal*, voice, Piano and harpsicord are effectively deployed (the latter in highly unorthodox fashion in his "scrap metal sonata" *Chotorno*), but the haunting timbres of flute, clarinet and oboe work especially well as partners to his varied electronic creations, which draw on natural sounds (water, birdsong) as well as processed ones. A disc which is best dipped into than taken in a gulp.

KENNY MATTHEWS

Yosuke Yamashita

Kurdish Dance

VERVE ST 7708 CD

Yamashita is a Japanese pianist who is refreshingly difficult to pin down. If he has the scrambling power and turbulence of Cool Taylor, he can also rein in the fire and fleet sensitivities of someone like Gen Ailen. If his playing contains the spurs and surprises of Monk, it also appears to possess some of the most extravagant classicism, even indulgences, of Keith Jarrett. In the end, of course, Yamashita is very much his own man, and this latest release gives a

fair indication of his highly individual style.

It features eight original compositions, two performed as somewhat directionless solo tracks, the remainder by a top drawer "New York Trio" of Cee McBee on bass and Pheeroan Akhaff on drums. Tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano also guests on several tracks. The straight trio settings work best; it is here that the conflicts and tensions inherent in the leader's music are most fully realised. Whereas the addition of Lovano's throaty, tumbling tenor lines can tend to smother the effect, the trio seem to know exactly where to go with the music, when to tame it, and when to let it run free. Rhythm is the real key to Yamashita's originality — either in the repeated offbeat figures he injects into his compositions or in the way he can set up a pulse and play against it, abstracting and refracting it with short bursts of energy and quickfire changes of metre and direction. An intriguing CD, one that improves with repeated listenings.

PHILIP WATSON

Zga

Zgamoniums

REK MEGACORP REC ZGA CD

The End Of An Epoch
REK MEGACORP REC ZGA CD 2

The use of civilisation's industrial debris as a musical sound source carries an unavoidably political slant, whether recycling by the act of reclamation or, in the case of Neuzauteuren, The Disposable Heroes of Hiphopnys and Test Department (among others), as a means of berating the society that produces the refuse. Latvian group Zga, players largely of self-made metal constructions, finished mixing *The End Of An Epoch* (prophetically titled as it turned out) on 18 August 1991, the night before the putsch that began the fragmentation of the old Soviet Union. These imaginative experiments, constructed from within an oppressive, censorial regime, cast an ironic light on some of the hip Western metal bashers, especially those with a penchant for being photographed wielding

hammers like the well-muscled subjects of Soviet work-ethic posters.

Zga's direct, uncompromising approach has no truck with such baggage. Even Zgomoniums, a comparatively rough, free-form affair, contains disarming passages of sadness and melancholia. The more fully realised *The End Of An Epoch* carries an emotional clout within its more structured framework — "Boschiana" runs harrowing wah-wah treated cries into a clattering procession of guitar chords, recorder and ominous percussion. Zga's extraordinary power peaks on the monolithic pulses of "Von Weisheit Spru", and though characteristically intense and disturbing, these factors are ultimately peripheral to the music's drive to communicate.

DAVE MORRISON

Zyklus

Virtual Realities

AMP CD D17

Comprising Neil Ardley, drummer/computer man Warren Greveson, composer synthesist John L. Waters (remember *Landscape* and "Eisenstein A Go-Go?") and trumpeter Ian Carr, Zyklus use an innovative MIDI performance system to create "virtual" sound environments for thematic improvisations. Inevitably much of the solo space is given over to Carr, who sounds forlorn and vulnerable in the rather industrial landscape conjured up by his colleagues. That's explicit and makes perfect sense on the dangerous "Ik Brune", but it jars a little elsewhere.

It's nice to have a latter-day "retraction" of Ardley's *Kaleidoscope Of Rainbows* (a jazz platter of the 70s, class, marked by Balinese scales and prime-number rhythm sequences), and Waters's long "Before The Oil Ran Out" is an intelligent blend of form and colour. A single standard, "Round Midnight", might have been left out. I'm intrigued to know how the technology performs in a live setting.

BRIAN MORTON

outline blues

Mike Atherton woke up this morning surrounded by new blues releases

They broke the mould after they'd made Big Joe Williams' Delta-born, illiterate hoboing across the USA working strictly for cash, he embodied the popular idea of the country blues singer and was, in his later years, an inspiration to young blues fans worldwide. In 1968 he was in London where, somewhat surprisingly teamed with producer Mike "Wombles" Batt, he cut the album 1968 London Sessions (Sequel NEX CD) and alone in the Albermarle Street studio, a 65-year-old Williams wove magic with the rolling bassines and

dangerous bottleneck runs of his guitar, and with a rhythmic unshod voice big enough to equal his playing. The plodding "Hand Me Down My Walking Stick" and "Shady Groove" are deep Delta perfection, yet when he plays finger style the tone is lighter and jollier, as on the rocking "Mama Don't Like Me Running Around" and the archaic "Scarde Mama". Eclectic as ever, he tosses in a rumbustious "Coming Down The Mountain" which adds to the distinctively personal appeal of this splendid 45 minute set.

Two time capsules produced by Chris Thrimming and Ron Watts of the National Blues Federation also reappear on Sequel Things Ain't Right by Texan one-man band Juke Boy Bonner (NEX CD 209) was cut in London in 1969. Bonner was always better appreciated in Britain than in his homeland, and his lively singing, inventive songs, rhythmic guitar and striling harp show that this was America's loss. Bonner's worldview extends from trans in Texas to loneliness in Berlin-on-Sea as chronicled in "B.U. Blues". Some cuts have a backing band but, with the exception of the hot instrumental "Texas Turnpike", these are tamer.

The following year, Delta blues forefather Eddie "Son" House toured Britain for the last time and *John The Revelator* (NEX CD 207) includes the cream of his two 100

Club gigs. We hear a gentle, happy, elderly man charming his young audience before flopping them with "Death Letter" and "How To Treat A Woman", as well as some acapella gospel. This is a fine release though it's a pity that it, like the Bonner CD, omits other tracks which were recorded at the time but remain unissued.

By way of atonement, Sequel have added extra tracks to their reissue of Louisiana Red's *Low Down Back Porch Blues* (NEX CD 213). Cut in 1962 before Red became the Patrick Moore of the blues, this is as tough a set of small group blues as you could wish for, with "Ride On Red" and "Seventh Son" being outstanding. As well as a couple of alternate takes, both sides of Red's 1963 Goler single "Too Poor To Die"/"Sugar Hips" are added.

Mike Vernon, former Blue Horizon Records owner, Fleetwood Mac launcher and all round blues bon oeil, is back with his new Indigo label, which bows with *Jimmy Witherspoon's The Blues, The Whole Blues & Nothing But The Blues* (IGO 2001). This 12 track set has the singer on top form, his voice resonant and authoritative, on prime songs by writers of the calibre of Delbert McClinton and Chris Youlton. The band, studious with great British players like Dick Heckstall-Smith, Pete Thomas and Pete Wingfield, is firm and sympathetic on highlights like the jumping title track, the soulful "Real Bad Day" and the meaty revival of Jimmy McCracklin's "Think".

Even better, in its way, is Honeyboy Edwards' *Delta Bluesman* (IGO 2003), a 27 track album which exploits the possibilities of the compact disc medium exceptionally well. 15 tracks from 1941, recorded by Alan Lomax, show the vocal power and guitar dexterity of the then 27 year old Edwards on songs like "Water Coast Blues" and the frantic "Tear It Down Rag", and remind us of his debt to Robert Johnson on "Wind Howling Blues". Honeyboy's spoken reminiscences, vivid and racy, intersperse these cuts. We move through a fair example of Honeyboy's Chicago band artist of the 70s to what would be almost a whole LP's worth of new 1991

recordings like "Number 12 At The Station", which comes close to emulating his former glories, and "Who Play Your Regular Be?", a lively Chicago blues backed by the great harp playing of Carey Bell. The album is closest one can get to a history of the artist without a boxed set or a book.

Down in Austin, Texas, Clifford Antone has operated a successful blues club for a number of years — so successful that, as Kim Wilson of the Fabulous Thunderbirds says, "Every legend of the blues has walked across that stage." In recent years, Antone has taken to recording the best shows at his club, particularly those taking place during his star-studded "Anniversary" shows; 11 clips from his archives comprise Antone's Anniversary Vol 2 (ANT CD 0016). The line-up substantiates Kim Wilson's words, with several ex-Muddy Waters sidemen, Texan guitar hero Albert Collins, Chicago harp veteran Snooky Pryor and downhome Louisiana bluesman Lazy Lester, strutting their stuff on a programme of spirited performances. Of particular note are Ois Rush's "Let's Have A Natural Ball", one of the three recorded instances of this artist sounding happy, and "Moaning At Midnight", on which harmonica James Cotton and guitarist Hubert Sumlin evoke the spirit of Howlin' Wolf with eerie authenticity. Calvin Jones's otherwise unremarkable "Shake For Me" also gives Sumlin a chance to revisit past glories as it uses Wolf's "Killing Floor" riff. While not a uniformly excellent disc, this anthology leaves one determined to visit Antone's one day.

outline coltrane

Ian Penman delves deep into a new retrospective of the great saxophonist's Impulse! recordings

It is now difficult for us to hear the scandal of Coltrane, what others once found outrageously new or unreasonable in the burst of his tone. Now it seems that what he did was if anything eminently reasonable — he simply extended the logic of jazz, worked away at

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what stood in order to clear away space for new forms of affirmation. He borrows from the assumed (in all senses) jazz heritage the resources necessary for a vivid deconstruction of that heritage itself. Thus, the times when he wrecks/wracks the properties of performance were what upset bloodless punts (to Larkin) the most, but some Black critics were suspicious too, because what he was taking apart was the necessary self-containment of the structure of what had gone before and, it was presumed, would carry black music on into the future.

We are left with his name alone to indicate a legacy which unsettled all the safe assumptions of Legacy. That is perhaps why his name is still so all-important, all-embracing: we still have no other names for what he provokes in us. Tones that put the listener, at times, right up against frustration, boredom, panic, and edgy rapture; a freedom bordering on dissolution, ego plunder, spent ambulation.

There can be something shifting about the colossus of technique. Even at his OUT-est there is often a restlessness of tone which easily flips over into flatness of tone — something unapproachable, unmeasurable. Tones which ached for utopian release, but often it was the ache (for utopia, for release) which he caught rather than anything utopian, a tone wherein he sounds what can only be called baffled. You can hear that on the first disc of a new three CD release *The John Coltrane Retrospective: The Impulse! Years* (GRP 31192), across the versions of "Impressions", "Spiritual", "Chasin' The Trane" — a ceaseless inundation, those waves of sound seemingly almost coming at him, rather than from him; he's trying his best to hold them but the tone is quizzical, he's trying to speak a new language that is being peeled into his ear, to translate messages from just beyond perception.

There is no simple repetition, but rather the sound of a restless itching for another technique, a parallel universe in which this song, the performance, might sound entirely different, where he might play all the alternatives at once, all the different of the 'same' song

A Love Supreme, I always felt, became too easily installed as the definitive breath of Coltrane — there's an over-played solemnity, which I can't be alone in finding verges awkwardly on cod-mystic. Whereas something like his rising (in all senses) of Billy Eckstine's "I Just Want To Talk About You" (disc two) blows me away not because it is less "demanding" (however something like that might be decided), but rather because it sounds altogether less forced, more in tune with itself, less like an obligation, more like a simple summons.

The arc on disc three — from "A Love Supreme (Acknowledgment)", into a glorious popular song double of "Nature Boy", "Chim Chim Cheree" and out again into Coltrane's own "Dear Lord", is, I think, revelatory. From "A Love Supreme" into "Chim Chim Cheree" ought to be a joke, but far from it: the latter sounds, if anything, further OUT, when he returns to the melody after having voyaged out around the tune's constellations, run all his harmonic interference, he retrieves some kind of unutterable poignancy: everything he touches turns to a certain melancholy, a certain glisten of loss, lost wholeness. His own "Dear Lord", which follows, sounds as if it has inherited from the previous two some deeper understanding of how melody works on us, fusing love song and devotional call, straining the voice between secular abandonment and devotional glory — just like the earliest Soul music, marking its transition from Gospel into Pop.

Purists may gripe that this compilation stays pretty much within safe waters, not venturing into the furthest out stuff; but this may make it more rather than less fascinating. The paradigm of Jazz's assertion, its invocation, its continual renewal and astonishment, is that the most banal melody can be worked, transformed, through an alternating logic of immanence and impossibility, into something entirely new. Coltrane takes the economy of the song, and breaks its genies bottle, unleashing vast plumes of demand and desire we always suspected were there.



Some sort of indefinable liberation was opened in the massive gulf of air he took, yet maybe John Coltrane's triumph lies precisely in all he didn't achieve, in all he sought to do or ought to have done and couldn't or didn't, in all that lay just an inch or pitch beyond him.

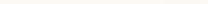
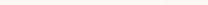
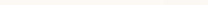
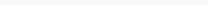
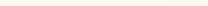
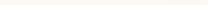
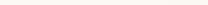
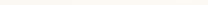
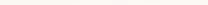
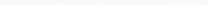
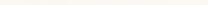
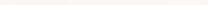
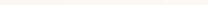
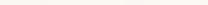
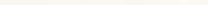
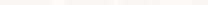
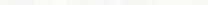
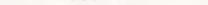
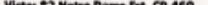
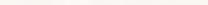
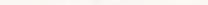
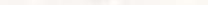
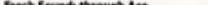
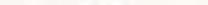
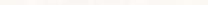
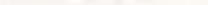
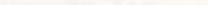
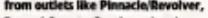
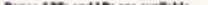
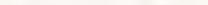
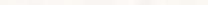
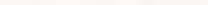
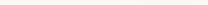
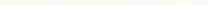
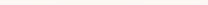
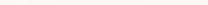
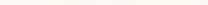
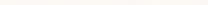
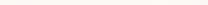
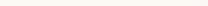
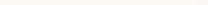
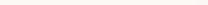
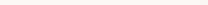
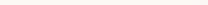
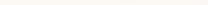
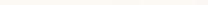
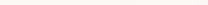
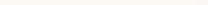
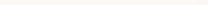
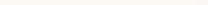
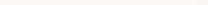
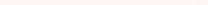
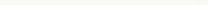
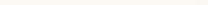
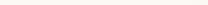
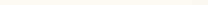
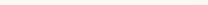
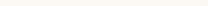
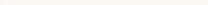
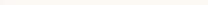
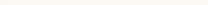
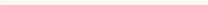
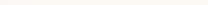
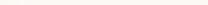
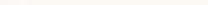
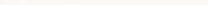
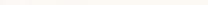
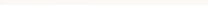
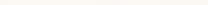
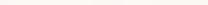
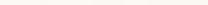
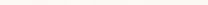
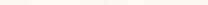
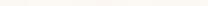
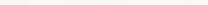
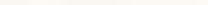
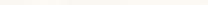
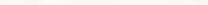
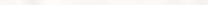
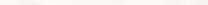
in brief club trax

Kodwo Eshun is your intelligent hoodlum on the dancefloor

Various Artists The Dark Side: Hardcore Drum and Bass (REACT)

UP17 Hardcore is to pop culture as ram raiding is to Rumbelows — a slam bang concussion. Chunks of music are brought together in a mutated pop frenzy, but its sampling ethics are as far removed from the magisterial high art of Pete Rock or Diamond D. Hip-Hop's current production number ones, as you can get. And the ram raiding analogy carries over into the detail of the music. Think of a Hi-Ace van as a sample, the ride as the rhythm, the crash as the beats and the adrenalin of getting away as the interface between your body and the beat. On this compilation, "Durban Posion" by Babylon Timewarp suddenly bursts into a moment of Oriental horns as if the inner city estate has cracked to reveal a seething colonial unconscious underneath. Youth aren't revolting, this music says, they are reverting. On "Illegal Subs" by Kotic Chemistry, there's a point of apalling awe: the furious tykeskid rhythms stop dead — for 26 seconds there's just sheer white noise, no information. You can locate Hardcore as the Black Economy of 1993 British culture. Its effect extends way beyond music. Racially, chemically, financially, it has a dodgy, shady sensibility to it. It hides away until you stumble, unawares, upon it, and then smash! It scrambles you... no respect, just smash, grab and getaway.

Various Artists Technovision (RUMOUR 2CR4010 12") In 1989 Acid was really the name of a folk panic, which made the actual music — Phuture, Armando — superfluous. 1993 and the music,



scattered on uncomprehending but receptive ears.

Positive K I Got A Man ISLAND

12B&WUJ 280 (12") The battle of the sexes — Cary Grant v Rosalind Russell in *His Girl Friday*, Nola Darling in *The Three Dogs in She's Gotta Have It* — is relocated (via a deliberate pastiche) of old School Hip Hop to a more innocent time, 1979, say. It reprints the deadly stakes of the 90s sex war as a screwball tradeoff — very light, very amusing. More overhanded than Ice Cube's "It's A Man's World" or Yo Yo's "You Can't Play", the track takes the sting out of antagonisms which aren't really funny at all. Lisa Jones calls them players in their own liberation struggles, these men who do women and valorise the crudest sexual stereotypes of themselves. It's the Dog Syndrome. Recall that early and primitive Godard film which first outlined this Dog Syndrome in it, one guy harangues a girl for 20 minutes nonstop and begs her to stay as she finally leaves? This record is better than that.

in brief jazz

Ben Watson opens an ear to recent jazz reissues

Anthony Braxton Ensemble (Victorville) 1988 (VICTOR 0007) Recorded live at the Musique Actuelle Festival, Braxton proves that his ability to organise improvisation is unequalled. He keeps the explosive sense of immediacy in free-playing at the same time as carving deft structures. The stellar caste (including George Lewis, Evan Parker, Joelle Leandre, Gerry Hemingway) could easily blind you with science, but they're deployed to crystalline effect. And Braxton's cover-pic has an uncanny resemblance to Lol Coxhill (in a wig)?

John Coltrane Dear Old

Stockholm (IMPULSE GRP 11202) Previously unreleased recordings of the Classic Quartet but with Roy Haynes subbing for Elvin Jones

You can see why Coltrane usually used Elvin (here his fiercely focused thunder replaced by Haynes' easy accuracy) but this release does provide a fine opportunity to view "After The Rain", "One Down, One Up" and "Dear Lord" in a new light.

Marilyn Crispell Labyrinths (VICTOR COOL)

Crispell's chunky, passionate solo piano requires work, but by the climax of this you're all hers. The set's marred by two (short) encores that bring back the tawdry Lisztiness we hoped Thelonious Monk had stamped out of piano jazz. Crispell's joking, of course, but it gives a disturbing tilt to the performance, making it all a little stagy — some of the blues and structure in Matthew Shipp or Irene Schweizer wouldn't go amiss here.

Paul Gonsalves Meets Earl Hines (BLACK LION BLC760171)

New York date from December 1970 (Al Hall on bass, Jo Jones on drums). You can't get much more full of character than Gonsalves. Ellington's tenor-sax veteran twists his notes into gnarled twigs, wood splinters of gaunt beauty. Hines is ebullient and playful. Revel in saxophone sounds teachers at Berklee probably call "off key".

JR Monterose The Message (FRESH SOUND FSR CD201)

A gem from a little-known white tenor saxophonist (not to be confused with another tenor, Jack Monterose). A background with Buddy Rich, Claude Thornhill and Charles Mingus — and a famous four nights-a-week, 62-week residency at a club on Green Street, Albany — well prepared him for this encounter with some of the stars of Hard Bop: Tommy Flanagan (piano), Jimmy Garrison (bass) and Pete LaRoca (drums). He's tackling the same problems as pre-modal Coltrane — finding Monkish harmonic extensions suitable for the tenor's weighty sound — but in his own way. His use of pauses and his sense of time are reminiscent of later tyro Frank Lowe. The drums sound as if they're recorded in another room, but this sparseness — and the delicate yet raw way the musicians interrelate — is entirely welcome.

Houston Person Personality (BGP CDBGP0670)

Soulful tenor saxophonist born in South Carolina in 1934, Houston Person's career spans Gene Ammons, Horace Silver and Bernard Purdie as well as a fistful of organists (Hammond Smith, Groove Holmes, Charles Earland). This selects from the albums he cut for Eastbound and Westbound in 1973/4: easy roadhouse music with a clean, punchy sound, the up-tempo tracks giving a new spin to New Orleans funk. Gospel and schmaltz ("You Are The Sunshine Of My Life") slow down the pace, and watch out for a couple of dodgy ballads from Spanky Wilson and Etta Jones (supposedly "ambience" courtesy chattering diners).

Max Roach Percussion Bitter Sweet (IMPULSE GRP 12122)

Bebop founder-drummer Max Roach's music is always well-organised, focused, clean, hard. As the title punningly indicates, this 1961 recording has a plan (it's a "suite"). If you expect the hard-bop blowout promised by the line-up (Booker Little, Eric Dolphy, Clifford Jordan) you'll be disappointed, but the understated structural logic pays dividends. Roach's attempts to make political points with wife Abbey Lincoln's jazz vocals — stylings irremediably tied up with nightclub sleaze and/or Carnegie Hall upward-mobility — are strained. But it's still great to hear Eric Dolphy dazzling on bass clarinet ("Tender Warriors") and alto ("Mendacity") and pianist Mal Waldron sews up Roach's push-pull rhythms into beautiful bundles. Nice trombone from Julian Priester too.

Shirley Scott Queen Of The Organ (IMPULSE GRP 12123)

Tenor-organ music recorded live in The Front Room in 1964, with Stanley Turrentine on sax, Bob Granshaw on bass and Otis Finch on drums. It's not quite the bulldozer the teaming of Lockheed Davis and Scott provide on the Cookbook records, but primo groove-juice nevertheless. You get more tracks than the original ABC/Impulse LP (the notes fail to mention that "Shirley's Shuttle" from the 1978 Dedication Series double-vinyl

release has gone missing). "Can't Buy Me Love" is particularly infectious, a rare example of a successful Beatles cover.

Ben Webster Compact Jazz The Verve Years (VERVE 513633) See You At The Fair (IMPULSE GRP 11212)

The Verve Years features 68 minutes from the sextet tenor sax of all, highlights from LPs recorded between 1953 and 1959. Webster swings rough and raucous, then breathes soft insinuations that are equally effective. If you draw a line from Archie Shepp to David Murray you'll find it points back to Webster. "Cottontail" swings like the clappers while "Chelsea Bridge" (with strings!) is far-fucking-out. Bargain sampler of stone classics. See You At The Fair has Webster in 1964 with Hank Jones (piano), Richard Davis (bass) and Ossie Johnson (drums) — spacious and gorgeous, but without the heart-stopping intensity of the previous decade. If you do it again, it will never sound as good: the iron law Coltrane understood so well. Wild card is keyboardist Roger Kellaway, caught just before he fled west to cello quartets, LA rockjazz. Innovations and Joni Mitchell's harpsichord contributions are an incongruous premonition of The Doors sound. CD padding is provided by two tracks from Oliver Nelson's *More Blues And The Abstract Truth* (much better heard in situ).

Nancy Wilson/Cannonball Adderley Wilson/Adderley

(CAPITOL 07778120421) Cannonball's premier soul jazz outfit (bro' Nat on trumpet, Joe Zawinul on piano, Sam Jones on bass, Louis Hayes on drums) reduced to backing a second-string chanteuse who fails to inject Broadway banality with either poignancy or funk. Half the tracks are instrumental, though, and these are fab. Clarity and drive, swing etched into the very funk-tone. Immaculate.



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letters

California Rag

The *Wire* has the difficult distinction of being a magazine that people care about passionately, myself included. I'm sure I'm not the only one to tell you that I am alarmed by the new fewer words-per-page format. [Actually you now get more words-per-page. Count me out if you don't believe us - *TH*.] Obviously you guys have contracted with some slick, narrow-niche mag-marketing consultant, the same kind of smarmers who've put the glitz and splash back into *Vanity Fair* and *Poetry Digest*: The *Wire* doesn't need that shit! Maybe it's just the shock of the new — but I hope you aren't going the "Music McNuggets" route.

Another point: while I'm on the rag here, it is refreshing to get a European perspective on Black American culture and race relations, partly because it's so often charmingly incorrect. Occasionally however, your work veers off dangerously into disguised racism. Case in point was the review of the new Showbiz & Gag record along with *Digable Planets* (*The Wire* 109). To indicate that the former's work is valid because it provides a soundtrack for the black urban underclass while the DPs aren't "down" because they quote Kafka is saying that Hip Hop which doesn't use the ghetto reference points to make its statement is not valid — this is the worse sort of pigeon-holing. You do not make this mistake with white artists who are encouraged in their eclecticism/syncretism (usually), so do not misread the aspirations and cultural reference points of the "black middle class", who elsewhere in the same issue are sneeringly referred to as "sefous" [are they? Read the relevant review of *Soul'd Together* and *Expansion Soul*, *Saucer*, etc.— *TH*.] Have a look at Darryl Pinkney's new novel *High Cotton* — it might clue you in to a world larger than your

love of the gangsta soundtrack.

Anyway, you guys do great work, occasionally in spite of your own slick selves. I want good prose, and found nothing wrong with your former taut layout.

Peter Riggs, Claremont, California

Futurist Shock

I was interested in Ben Watson's article in the Great Lost Recordings series (*The Wire* 110). However, in seeking to reassess the work of Ennio Morricone, he seems to find it necessary to rewrite history as well.

I really don't think that the fascists in Italy can be said to have "stamped out the art of noise" of the Futurists. For a start, many of the Futurists, including Marinetti, author of *The Art Of Noises*, actually were the fascists themselves. Second, Futurist music seems to have died a natural death when the novelty wore off. Russolo gave up music at the start of the 30s, due to lack of public interest, and left his noise-making machines in Paris, where they got bombed in the war. I don't think we can quite describe this as being "stamped out".

Ben Watson also refers to "Mussolini's propagandist Ezra Pound" in this context. Although Pound did some dodgy things in his life, I think it's rather unfair to blame him for helping to kill off Futurist music. There is only one reference (a journal one) to Marinetti in all of Pound's writing on music, and none at all to Russolo or any other Futurist musician. However, as well as promoting the revival of Vivaldi (surely not a capital crime, even taking into account Capital FM!), it should be remembered that he also encouraged George Antheil, whose *Ballet Mécanique* is at least pseudo-Futurist.

The fact remains that the relationship between the Italian

fascists and modernism was rather more complex than in Germany (stamp them out) or the Soviet Union (tolerate them for a bit then stamp them out). No doubt an interesting article could be written on this subject, though not, perhaps, by Ben Watson

Paul Steeple, London

The Word On Music

A question often posed, if only implicitly, by articles in *The Wire* (especially book reviews) is what constitutes worthwhile writing about music? Most of us would no doubt favour a pluralistic answer over prescriptive or prescriptive ones. But far too much pseudo-intelligent writing on popular music ignores strictly musical considerations, dwelling instead on sociological or, what one might call, phenomenological issues.

A case in point was the overview of Gil Scott-Heron's recorded output (*The Wire* 108), a succinct, evocative outline of GSH's concerns as expressed in his lyrics, but one that described the music in relatively superfluous terms. Are we to assume that the music is a mere mood-setting backdrop to the lyrics? Or no interest in its own right?

The type of writing it would be nice to see encouraged is that which has at its core an emphasis on the actual rhythmic, melodic, harmonic, contrapuntal and textual

construction of the music, and an urge to reveal what makes it uniquely worthy of attention.

As for Don Pullen's provocative comment (*The Wire* 109) that although Cecil Taylor's playing is unique and profound, he's not a jazz musician because he can't swing... you could devote a whole issue to the implications of that!

Bob Quail, London

Form(al) Complaint

I must admit to being a mite puzzled over Stuart Nicholson's review of Howard Riley's *The Heat Of Foment* (*The Wire* 110). I am flattered that a musician on my record label is mentioned in the same breath as Keith Jarrett, but just what is this "no form and structure" argument that Stuart Nicholson uses? Howard Riley's CD brims with form and structure, and on many different levels too.

Whilst "Mirror Image", a piece totally consisting of symmetrical form and structure, i.e., seven bars in which bars one to three are exactly reversed melodically, harmonically and rhythmically in bars five to seven, with bar four as a link. And if you don't fancy the symmetrical type of form and structure, what about the other kind, the three Ts of Time, Tempo and Tune, which Stuart Nicholson seems to pine for? Take "Folklore", the closing track, so called because it is just simple, melodic tune, complete with chords, time, etc.

I also hope that the next time Stuart Nicholson tries to work out why pop music is so popular, he may also extend his critique to a consideration of why the designer jazz of the Thatcher years is just as popular. Is it because jazz, as we know it, is slowly being turned into pop music (image, bad playing, hipness, etc.)?

Brian Miller, Wondrous Music, Kent

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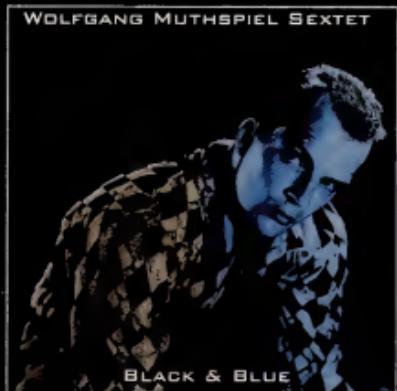
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